



# HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Narrator: Miller, William G.

Date: March 7, 1985

Place: Medford, MA

Interviewer: Shahla Haeri

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Q. Mr. Miller, I'd like to start by asking you about how you became familiar with Iran. When was the first time that you became familiar with the country and the people?

A. Well, I think I'd have to go back to the time that I was in college -- Williams College -- in the early '50s. And, ironically, Williams is where the Shah's family spent considerable time, and it's the place where Richard Helms was a student in the 1930s.

When I was there was in the early 50s, and my first perceptions of Iran really occurred then, because of the press coverage of Mohammad Mossadegh. And, what I can recall

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-- and I think this is an accurate recollection -- is that the press, particularly journals like Time magazine, portrayed Mossadegh as a caricature, even though he was on the cover of their magazine -- as an eccentric. He was described -- and I can recall this very vividly -- as "weepy Mossadegh." Somehow a buffoon.

Since my interests were in entirely different fields at the time -- English Literature -- Iran's concerns, and my ideas about Iran, or knowledge of Iran, quickly passed. It was only that image that was conveyed by these dominant journals.

I then went to Oxford. And there I met some Iranians, along with other people from the Middle East. And as it turned out, as fate would have it, some of these Iranians became my closest friends in years to follow -- intellectually, socially, personally. But in the Oxford years I had no intention -- or knowledge of the Middle East -- any intention of going there. So it was purely an accident of being in the same place with the same people.

There were other awarenesses of Iran that had to do with my studies ... of Renaissance literature. There were references to Hormoz, the Pearls of the Gulf, the Treasures of the Orient. It was an exotic place, but very distant, and of no



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concern to me, since my intentions were to teach literature.

There were other awarenesses of Iran that had to do with Iranians in various parts of Europe. They were very evident in places like Geneva, where they were referred to -- again in caricature -- as "oil wells." Very wealthy Iranians who attracted to themselves, it would appear, a playboy image. And beyond that, there was no other sense of recognition of Iran ... for me.

Then I returned to Harvard, again to pursue advanced studies in English literature. And as fate would have it, the Foreign Service exams that I had taken while at Oxford suddenly became relevant. And through a chain of circumstances, which I don't need to go into, I decided to enter the Foreign Service -- to get it out of my system, in a way.

And, again, as the fates would have it, I was assigned to Iran. Through no choice of my own, and no knowledge of Iran. And, as fate would have it, I was assigned to Esfahan. With no language training, and very little training in the history of the area -- certainly no review of the files, and no understanding of what the real span and effect of what the American presence had been in Iran, historically.

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So I went to Iran as a naive -- or even more accurately, as a primitive, put it that way.

Q. What year was that?

A. This was in 1959. And I had some sense of Iran before going. There were some briefings of a very sketchy nature, and I did attend some language sessions. As I recall, the language teacher was Batmanghelich, one of the ....

<Interruption>

Q. Please go on.

A. Let's see. Yes, we came to Iran in late 1959. We had come very gradually through the Middle East from Cairo, Beirut, Damascus. And the sense of going deeper into Asia was a very strong one. And the difference between the Arab world and Iran was very dramatically conveyed by this trip. The world of Cairo, and certainly of Damascus, at least at that time, was vastly different than what we found in Iran.

For one thing, weather. Not to mention the structure of cities and villages. Tehran at that point had not become a

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hopelessly overcrowded urban mess. It was still, in many ways, open, and gave a great sense of integration with this glorious landscape, with snow-covered mountains and gently sloping terrain down into the city. And the sense of water and trees and gardens was dominant.

The idea of city as buildings overwhelming individuals was not there. It was one of -- that I came to see as dominant in Iran -- was this sense of garden, of civilization, of creating something of the best of nature within a city.

So the initial contacts were a great surprise and delight. It was very, very pleasant. And after a ... the turmoil of the airport, where no one from the embassy came to meet us because we were so junior, we were helped by everyone in sight. So everyone was very helpful. Not only the Iranians, but European travelers who were sympathetic to ... disaster in arrangements such as these. But all of that worked out.

Then we had the .... Then we went down to Esfahan. We lived in the .... The very first day we arrived, we were put into a ramshackle hotel. It was called the Esfahan Hotel, which was in the Maidan Mojaaseme-h, as it was called. Right at the ... Esfahan side of the Si va se-h pol, the bridge of 33 arches that looked up to Kouh-e Sofeh <Mount Sofa-h>, the

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dominant mountain in the Esfahan area.

Q. Kouh-e Sofeh?

A. Kouh-e Sofeh. Yeh. Which has on top the ruins of a Sassanian castle. And earlier remains, as I found later.

And, while the hotel was very ramshackle, everyone was very pleasant. It was a different world. The hotel was on different levels. It was made of mud-brick, and there were cotton woven carpets everywhere, and the dominant food was .... The jam in the morning was made of beh <quince>, and there was an infinity of carrot-cake. But of course the bread and the sangak -- the noon-e sangak -- and the barberi <a kind of bread> were all marvellous. We gradually became accustomed to the smells and sights and sounds.

But we had this look on the main thoroughfare of Esfahan -- this marvellous jewel of the world -- which was a revelation, because I only had faintly heard of Esfahan by this time, and the sense of architectural magnificence was something that was new to me. Of this kind.

But the very day that I arrived, I was .... I went to the

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consulate, which was right across the street, on one of the ... it was right on the Chaharbagh, just before it came into the square. And the very first duty, after meeting the staff, was to go to a funeral -- in a mosque.

Some prominent Esfahani businessmen had died, and there was a memorial service. And all of the dignitaries of the city -- and we, as I quickly learned, were dignitaries, for that purpose -- were invited, to pay respects, and listen to orations of one kind, the readings from the Koran -- but also from the poets. And this was in the Masjid-e Naderahah, which Shah Sultan Hussein, on the Chaharbagh -- a magnificent mosque, not one of the best, but beautiful.

So this was my first encounter with Iran. Formally. And I found the whole approach to death fascinating. The ritual nature of it, and the ceremony on the secular side -- obviously a secular manifestation, with cigarettes and coffee. Bitter coffee. But the formulaic expressions of regret, and the delight, really, that everyone had in being there.

And so my very first contact with Iran was religious. And the ... I found no sense of hostility. The mullahs were ... extremely respectful and courteous, and even amusing. They

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began to tell jokes, which were translated for me at that point.

Now, I began immediately to take lessons in Farsi. And I had a constant companion, who was one of the Iranians who worked in the consulate, who was from a good family of Esfahan, and had gone to the American College in Tehran, and had a very strong devotion to strong relations between the countries -- almost messianic. But a very gentle and civilized man.

So, in that first few months, it was meeting all the dignitaries of Iran. First, the officials. Now the governor-general at the time, in Esfahan, was Abbas Farzanegan, who had been a brigadier-general .... he was a brigadier-general at that point. He quickly advanced to full general. And he was very friendly to me, and he kept saying how much he welcomed the Americans, and their presence in Iran. He seemed to attach great importance to it.

He spoke English with an American accent. He had spent a number of years in the United States. And he also had children who were studying in the United States. So that sense of identification of officialdom with the United States -- formally, officially -- was something that gradually I began to understand.



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And he quickly told me -- quite gratuitously, really -- about the Mossadegh coup. And he spoke of discontent and corruption. This was something that was a great surprise to me is that everyone was vatanperest <patriotic>, in a way, but at the same time deeply critical of the regime -- a love of country, great discussions about corruption, and what was going wrong.

I quickly learned from Farzanegan himself, and from others, that he was the bag-man in the Mossadegh overthrow. Now, I learned that before I knew what the Mossadegh overthrow was. Or what its consequences ... who was involved ... no one had ever told me officially that the United States had been involved in this. So, ....

Q. You did not know by then, when you went there?

A. Well, the official position was that the Shah returned, and the forces loyal to him rose up and drove Mossadegh out because of his refusal to abide by the signed decree, and that he was ... his government had been infested by Communists, and the people rose up against that. And that he had lost his popularity, had become authoritarian, and ... so on.

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So, gradually -- and this is the ... perhaps it's a good thing -- I learned about Iran's politics from Iranians. Then I was able to learn about my own country's involvement in Iran. Starting first with that perspective, and ... having the luxury of seeing it from two perspectives.

Coming, as I did, as a very young officer with no preconceptions, it was a fresh problem. And I'm afraid it's shaped my view -- years of Iran -- not afraid, because I think it's perhaps the best perception. Nevertheless, that's the way I came to see it.

Esfahan was a wonderful place, because it was small enough .... Our position as diplomats was so valued by the people of Esfahan -- it was a compliment to them in many ways, and they took it as such, but they were very welcoming. So that, from the governor-general on down, through the Shahrदार <mayor>, who, in this case .... Let's see, the Shahrदार was ... oh, goodness, he was an Esfahani -- Hossein or Habib, Habib, I think.

He was highly-regarded because he was a mayor who planted trees, and the trees grew. So the chenar <maple> that he planted were ... He had been there on an earlier occasion ...



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he had been ousted in some intrigue, and he had come back and was vigorously cleaning up the butcher-shops, and forcing the cleaning of the <?> every spring. And behaving the way you would expect a good mayor to behave. And he was an Esfahani, so this was seen as a great blessing, because generally the Shahrdar in the post-war period had been imposed.

And the feeling about the Shah in Esfahan was that he didn't like Esfahan. He was like the Qajars -- they didn't like Esfahan either. Because of the rivalry with Tehran. All of the regional jealousies, and so on, were expressed.

Well, I spent the first year learning Persian, meeting people, doing formalities -- that is, going to the opening of all the new factories. So, a new canning factory had been <opened>, and I would go and examine the factory, and learn all about canning. And you'd of course meet all the people. Milk-pasteurizing plant, new spinning-mills for Esfahan, and so on. And going to ceremonial occasions -- religious occasions, too! So there was no division at that time -- it was perfectly normal to be a part of the religious celebrations. Not the mourning period, but anything else.

And Esfahan at that time was a very active Sufi center, and there was a ... let me see if I can remember who it was -- it

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was a great poet, who was still active, who was a Ne'matollahi. And he had a huge following. And he would have, on the occasion of Ne'matollahi's vali, the <?> person's death... whenever ... I've forgotten ... in that time it was in the spring. It was a beautiful occasion.

They had these meetings in a huge mosque up in the bazaar region. Let me see if I can remember which one -- I can't recall. But at any rate, the entire occasion was reading Sufi poetry, including the Ne'matollahi. There was a lot that was beautiful. And ... the warmth and ... there was no antipathy. It was simply ...

In fact, in the two years that I was in Esfahan, I went to every mosque, every shrine, every madrasah <school>. And one of the things I did there was to do a study of the bazaar -- over a year's period. And I photographed every shop and every caravanserai and every mosque. And I visited all of these places.

And there was only one place where there was any hostility. It was a shrine way in the poorest section, in which some ... religious person of the fifteenth century had a tomb. And the women would come and tie a piece of cloth ... But it was reserved for ... cure of disease, and things of this sort, so

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it was a very superstitious place, obviously. There was a lot of totemism, tying things, and ... tearing pieces of cloth -- these manifestations.

And it was in a very poor area within a poor area. It was very hard to get to, so it was like penetrating the Holy-of-Holies. There was some sense of: "What are you doing there, since you have no petition to make?" If I had had a petition, I'm sure it would have ... and it was women, mostly. So that was the only time in Esfahan I had any sense of feeling that I was intruding or that I had no business to be there.

This was the time, of course, that all of the mosques in Esfahan -- the great mosques -- were being repaired. So the great work of the Esfahani craftsmen was very much there. It was the beginning of the opening of tourism. And the ... it was also the revival -- from all I learned at the time -- of religious teaching. You know, in the madrasah, for example. They had a full ....

All of the students' rooms in that lovely mosque were filled with students. It wasn't just an architectural exhibit -- it was a functioning madrasah. And there were various teachers expounding on various parts of the religious curriculum. But,

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again, there was no sense of intruding if you went to visit, and questioned about points of doctrine, and so on and so forth. It was a very open situation.

And it was glorious because ... physically, because the great tile-makers were working on minute repairs and the silversmiths were putting new silver doors on the -- every craft was being revived, and there was a sense of pride within the city.

We were very close to ... we had very close friends in Esfahan who were Iranians. And most of our friends -- not all, but most of our friends had western connections. They had studied at some point in Europe. Their children were in America or in England or France. And they were wealthy enough to travel. And they were doing things, many of which .... They had tennis courts, they had swimming pools. In some cases ... although in Esfahan it was very modest, and very concealed. Not .... Obviously religious attitudes were part of it, but Esfahanis are very protective of their wealth, anyway. They're not ostentatious in any way.

There was a division between Tehran authority and Esfahan, reflected in the great pride of the local mayor. There was great disdain for Ferzanegan and the succeeding

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governors-general because they came from other places and were of lesser family. So they ... I became very keenly aware of family distinctions and relationships, and the questions of if someone is a clean or dirty person. That was a concept that I very quickly appreciated, between clean and dirty. It was a term that was used constantly, and that had every manifestation physically, as well. But, more importantly, it was moral.

Q. Did they use the term "kassief" <dirty>?

A. Yes. Yes. I mean, literally. Literally.

And, of course, the metaphors for the Esfahanis are ... they have many. They're a very funny people, and very ingenious about praising or insulting. But ... I found at least the people we were acquainted with extraordinarily concerned about moral questions. And it became very evident to me that political judgments were also very deeply embedded. That those who were making moral judgments were very politically active, even if there was no politics. So ....

But there was a lot of politics there, as well. The ... there was a stronghold of Jebheye-Melli <National Front> people. And some of our friends were members of that group,

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actively ... Borounnada ... family. But there were many others. And they ... The spectacle ... I saw them march when there was a moment of pre-elections one day. And then they were arrested right in front of my eyes by SAVAK, so ... And these were people of the gentlest, most humane, sort, so ....

And of course I had met the SAVAK people in the formal occasions.

Q. Excuse me <changes tape>.

Q. Please go ahead.

A. And the whole idea of a secret police in a country which was new to me was brought home. There's a sense of intrusion, fear, arbitrariness.

Other manifestations of politics were among the laborers in the ... particularly in the spinning-mills, of which there were 22, I think, at the time. And they had a union. This was the first complication that I became aware of, of American policy, is that aid programs had sent labor experts. And the labor experts saw, as a solution, unions.

Unions and government control are antithetical, obviously.



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And here you had SAVAK's efforts to control the unions, and they would always arrest people who disagreed. And they would go to jail, they'd be beaten up, and .... So the beginnings of the sense of this kind of arbitrary control of things became evident. And it was clear that the SAVAK person, or persons, in Esfahan were deeply distrusted and hated. And seen as unclean. They did dirty things. Not only was it a question simply of beating people up, or arresting them in the night, but it was also the practices of seduction and bribery, and so on and so forth. All of the devices.

Esfahan was a very good place for me, because one of the attractions of being there was to travel throughout the consular district. And for us the consular district was all of Iran. Southern Iran, really from Qom to the Gulf. So I travelled in every corner of Iran. Makran, Baluchistan, to Bandar Abbas, Chahbahar, Jask -- all of those places. Out to the islands -- Hormoz, Langeh, down in the Persian Gulf on over to the other side. Then, of course, Bushahre and the old pearl-fishing cities, which were absolutely magnificent.

Now this was at a time when there were no paved roads. So it was all by difficult jeep and Land-Rover. Or by horse or foot.

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Q. To none of these cities?

A. Well, I mean, to Bandar Abbas, which was a major route, it was a very difficult highway. I mean, you would go through riverbeds for hundreds of kilometers. And if it rained, you had to wait. And the main form of transport still -- you could see trucking having an effect -- were camel caravans. In that part of Iran. And along the Gulf, of course, there were huge herds of camels that were breeding or....

And the life was a very different life. It was totally different. And the life in the ranges of mountains behind the Gulf was primitive beyond belief -- they were so cut off. And it was a world of centuries' difference between Esfahan and Tehran. Even the road between Esfahan and Tehran was not yet paved. So it took eight to ten hours to drive. And you'd be covered with dust. And the main road between Esfahan and Shiraz was not paved. And you would be covered with dust.

And anything beyond that was ruta, and just camel and donkey tracks, that you were going through. Lorries -- we'd see nine or ten paths where they would choose a route that had the least number of gullies. And inevitable, as you know in



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Iran, you would find wrecks where they had collided -- where there was no reason to be on the same path, but they would manage to do it.

I went on tribal migrations. Esfahan having a number of the khana -- lesser khana, because the major ones were in prison. They were friends ... In fact, we lived in the house of one of the Bakhtiars, Yahyah Khan.... He rented three of his houses to the consulate. But we lived in his house on the Square. It was a lovely house, with a view of things, and very civilized ... in his way. He also had a village up in Bakhtiar country, where we visited.

At any rate, one of his brothers and some of his cousins arranged for migration, so I went on a migration, into Khuzestan from ... across the mountains. It was a glorious trip over several weeks. I did a lot of that: camel-patrols in Baluchistan ... so I had a sense of village-life. I became very interested in what the village structure was, and ...

I became very interested in archaeology and the various earlier cultures. I went to, of course, the Achaemenid monuments many times and ... but every teppe-h <hill> in Iran yields shards, of which I have probably a few hundred

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pounds in this house.

Q. <unclear>

A. So it was total immersion. And after two years there, I felt I knew a great deal about some of the aspects of Iran. Certainly family life in Esfahan -- I knew the major ... we had come to know the major families from the Qajar regime, as well as the governmental officials, and so on. And we came to know the major families in Shiraz, because it was part of our official business.

And the tribal leaders. And the new intelligentsia -- the Western-trained -- was the natural orbit, so its doctors, and the new university professors, and so on. They were people my own age, in many cases.

So we went to Tehran, and my job was to work as the ambassador's assistant... in the first instance, and .... So my life became more official. There were more courtly things to be done. We had to go to the Shah's Court, and so on.

I had met the Shah a number of times in Esfahan. It's part of the rituals ...the Shah would come with a royal visitor, or distinguished visitor, to Esfahan as one of the tours of

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Iran. In that period, the Shah came with the Queen of England and Philip, with the Crown Prince of Japan, King Hussein, ... two other occasions. And so, we would meet him, and we'd chat, and so on and so forth. And we had some sense of recognition -- even at my stage. And Alam was with him, and a few of the others.

These were marvellous occasions. I recall when the Queen of England came, they painted the entire route, all of the kouche-h walls -- mud-brick walls -- were painted blue, because it was said that the Queen liked blue. So all of Esfahan had been painted blue. Many Esfahani jokes.

And the glorious arches that were made, grumbling, by the factory-owners, who were ordered by the governor-general to build an arch: "If you don't build an arch ...." There were threats, obviously, so they had to build an arch, and they had to make contributions, they had to lay down carpets ... But it was glorious because the entire Chaharbagh is paved with mosques, and the Chehel Sotoun <Forty Pillars> was covered in magnificent carpets ... and great banquets, and so on. It was one occasion -- and again, this was the Queen.

In the Chehel Sotoun, they decided to build a bathroom for the Queen, on the grounds that she had to have somewhere ....

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And it was placed in the middle of ... Have you been in Chehel Sotoun? Then you know where the paintings are of Shah Abbasa' victory over the Turks? They built one right there. A wall, and so on. This entire bath -- they had a bath, a bidet.... Anyway,

Q. <unclear>

A. So, the courtly life -- I had some sense of that. But in Tehran it was sallams. We had sallams in Esfahan which were mini-versions of the sallams in Tehran. Presentation of the diplomatic corps, and the compliments back and forth, and brief words with each .... It was, you know, the sense of a court. And I could see that it was very important to them. There was no informality -- it was very formal.

I didn't like that kind of .... It wasn't interesting to me. I found it very boring. And my real interest in Iran was ... As a diplomat, as someone whose work was to observe and describe Iran, was what people were thinking, my own generation -- books, ideas, thinkers -- what was happening in the country. Change -- the change was happening in front of my eyes -- I could see that. You had to be an idiot not to understand the change.

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And being a fierce constitutionalist myself, constitutionalism was very attractive to me. I found the intensity of idealism among Iranian constitutionalists wonderful. It was so idealistic, and so attractive intellectually. And it seemed to be the one solid point of ... that had an Iranian -- purely Iranian -- nature to it. The 1906 Constitution seemed to reflect all the structure of society -- in fact, they were enumerated in the articles.

And the idea that it is a borrowing from Belgium, or perhaps from the French Revolution, or from the American Revolution, is very superficial. Because the idea of having limits to action through law is a perfectly human achievement, accomplished by all peoples of any consequence.

And this seemed to me a solid piece of work, and that those who were pursuing that vein, in my view, reflected the best in Iran. They happened to be my friends. But they had thought it through, and they had suffered ... They understood this ... it had historical basis.

Further in the embassy, someone who helped me with Persian, and also with my official duties, of meeting officials, and what have you, was Ali-Pasha Saleh, who was the brother of

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Alahyar and Jahanshah. And there's one other brother, I think, who ...

Q. Alahyar.

A. No, Alahyar ... There's Ali-Pasha. But there's a fourth brother, who I met. And there are many sons. At any rate, they're a Kashan family. And, I hadn't known very much about Kashan -- I knew the bazaar in Kashan. But they have a lovely village outside of ... between Kashan ... up in the mountains, beyond Feen. And it's a beautiful, absolutely beautiful, place.

And here I could see the old Iran -- the absolute devotion of the villagers to this man ... it was a tiny village, and it could not exist except for the Salehs. They had no ... there was no basis, economic basis. But it was a paradise. And the enlightened civilization there was clearly implicit -- their education, among the villagers, care, gradual adaptation of the benefits of technological civilization were coming. And they were bringing it, in a well-thought-out way. It was a kind of civilized land-reform, you might say.

But the stories that I had heard about Mossadegh as a land-owner, and seeing the Salehs functioning in what



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appeared to be the same way, as I began to make connections, and so on.

But at any rate, at that time, many of the younger students, the people my age, who had come from the United States, who were active in Plan Organization, who were doing things, going into the villages, starting new industries, had decided they wanted to build a new Iran, were constitutionalists. And many of them were active -- were Jebhey-e Melli <National Front>. And those who were not, because they were disinterested, they were not political in that way, were very sympathetic.

And it's certainly my feeling that in the early '60s, had there been an openness on the part of the regime, these people would have flourished, and they would have been the leaders of Iran.

What happened, clearly, was that there was no place to go, politically, so they simply either devoted all their energies to making money, doing some things in government, normal things, or left. Or went to jail, in extreme cases, like Matine-Daftary, and what have you.

But it was a .... they were a sizable group of

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extraordinarily attractive, intelligent people, numbering many thousands. And it was a kind of Renaissance. It was an amazing group. They were in the universities, and they ... And they were terribly, as I said, peaceful. You know, there was no sense of ... in fact, the violent way was rejected -- utterly rejected.

For me, the ... my interest was traveling everywhere, and I enjoyed that. And I would take my Iranian friends with me, because they didn't travel in many cases. They had never seen many of these things. And I'm happy to say that many of them got hooked on .... seeing many of .... But that's normal. For any ... the time one sees one's own city is when visitors come, and you're forced to do it, so there's something of that. But I would go with them to their home-villages, and strange places like Sabzahvar, and ....

Then I went on trips to Kurdistan. We had a consul up there, named Eagleton, who knew the Kurds very well from his duties in Iraq. He was consul in Iraq. He's now ambassador in Damascus. And so I visited all the Kurdish leaders. And we had this funny ... SAVAK was chasing us everywhere, wondering.... He had told them he was doing this, but ....

It was the sensitivity to different groups, I mean, that was



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evident. The whole idea that perhaps there was interfering in internal affairs, and so on. So I became aware of that fear on the part of the regime that there were disloyalties of one kind or another. And, in fact, there weren't.

Q. There were not?

A. There were not. In none of the groups that I met in all the time that I was there -- the five years that I was there -- did I see anything that said the Shah had to go. The only ... the most extreme point of view was "Reign, not Rule." Let us have a share in our country. It was that "we need a king. We've always had a king. Be a king." It was that kind of business.

Certainly, the more you went out of Tehran to the edges of things, the sense of the regime was inconsequential, except where there were SAVAK places, and so on -- where it was intruding. It was like the old days: you were many days away, except in a few places that had airports. And issues and problems were settled in their own way. So in the provinces, the further away, the happier, in some respects, even if poorer. Certainly from the point of view of governments.

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And this was the time before the great oil revenues, and it was a time when Iran was still heavily dependent on US aid money.

And there the question that became very evident to me was our role. We had a dominant role at that point, and it was .... We had such a confused picture of what we were doing there. And it was partially because we had so many ... there were so many groups and people doing things of one kind or another.

There were the traditional missionary-educators, and so on. There was ... were pursuing ... improving health ... bettering universities, sometimes intelligently, the other times with great violence, not understanding the strengths of what was there, and imposing Dick and Jane on ... and getting rid of Sa'adi and Hafez, which I thought was a great loss. But they were able to deal with that.

The huge military presence, I found .... It was huge, it was very .... it grew when I was there. And it seemed to satisfy the Iranian military. Clearly, the first Azarbaijan Day that I went to the parade in Esfahan was comic-opera. Its military quality was, you know, ... abysmal. But in a matter of a few years, it had changed to magnificent competence of one kind or another. As a military group, they were becoming

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superb. So there were military purposes.

And then the intelligence people had their relationships with SAVAK. And that was a troubling relationship because of what SAVAK was doing. And the identification of the United States with SAVAK was becoming more and more and identity, rather than simply an advisory role. And this was causing problems.

And of course, in the aid, simply economic aid, there were arguments about debt payments, and .... Debt payment was the reason that Ali Amini collapsed. There was a crucial moment where, if there had been a debt extension, Ali Amini would have survived. And he was pushing for a more open government, and this was right at the moment of the so-called White Revolution. And his relationship with Arsenjani, and some dynamic ministers ....

The question of elections. The beginnings of restiveness about the Americans, particularly the military presence, and, on a legal basis, the whole idea of status-of-forces agreements and capitulations were identified. And it was because the question was ... we ... that a crime against a person, whether it was a rape or an auto accident, these everyday affairs, would not receive, in Iranian courts, justice.

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And in some cases, that was true, but it raised the question of: "Why do you need a separate justice? Why don't you help us have justice?" You know, the questions were being asked.

Then, of course, for most of the Americans, the insensitivity to capitulations ... in the late 19th century -- and the whole idea of legal sovereignty -- was completely missed.

So the loan to the Amini government was far more than a debt-extension. It was really whether to support the opening, politically, or to support the Shah unequivocally. And they sided with the Shah.

There had been a continuing argument among the American policy-makers about SAVAK, repression, opening up the political process. There were feelings that Iran was still unstable, that the Shah himself was weak as a personality, and the argument became ad hominem -- you're for or against the Shah -- rather than an analysis of what the country as a whole looks like, and where it was going, and what the dynamics of all of this movement and change, and this new education, and these tens of thousands of highly-intelligent, capable people. What role were they going to play? Were they just to be functionaries, or did

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they have a stake in running their country?

How was the Shah going to fit into this? What responsibilities did the United States have in their advice to the Shah, which they gave -- freely. But the Shah sought ... and, after all, the Shah, the relationship between the Shah and the United States was very fundamental.

You'd have to look at the quality of the American ambassadors. Those who understood Iran, intuitively, or understood the Shah's character, I think performed a service. But there are very uneven periods. And that's another kind of question altogether.



# HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: William G. Miller

Date: March 7, 1985

Place: Medford, MA

Interviewer: Shahla Haeri

Tape no: 2

Q. Please go ahead.

A. Quite by chance, I saw a fair amount of the Shah and the Shah's court. Although, ... my interests, obviously, were elsewhere. But the Shah skis, and I ski, and when we first came, the only skiing was at Ab Ali. And then Mohsen Khajenouri formed the Nour Club.

Q. The Nour Club?

A. Nour, yes. This was just beyond Ab Ali -- a little higher, up near the pass. And it had the first T-bar, or J-bar, I guess it was. And it was a club. It wasn't open, like Ab Ali, where anyone could go. This was for people who

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were members of the club. And the Shah used to ski there. So we skied together a number of times, with his bodyguards and all of that.

Then I played tennis with Mrs. Alam. She always liked to have challenges of one kind or another, so we played a few times. We also had the same ... Pro teaching -- he was a Pakistani first, and there were two Iranian brothers, who were the best tennis players in Iran, I think. Let's see if I can remember ... I can't remember their names, but they played at Amjadiye-h. Amjadiye-h was right next to the embassy.

Tennis at that time was a very big pleasure for various people. And I would play four or five times a week, and there would be ... particularly on Thursday evenings there would be great round-robins, and we had lovely sessions. It was like a "dowreh", in which a number of groups would intersect, even though they had different views, and would never involve themselves in any other way except tennis -- and tea. That kind of ...

But I became aware of the "dowreh" as political life in Iran -- that in the absence of political parties, the social meetings that people would have become a substitute, or a

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substitute means of talking about such matters. And that communications was very intricate and complicated, but through the mosque, through business, through sport, through literature, universities, everyone knew what was happening -- instantly. There was no shortage of awareness. It didn't matter if the papers were censored or doctored. There was always Towfigh to present in a cartoon what was really happening, and there was some poem that had the punctuation placed in a strategically wrong place... And there was always the bazaar network. It was an open society, in a curious way, and there was a great deal of discussion and ferment.

The sadness, of course, is that at that point there was no fundamental hostility to the Shah. There was no reason that he couldn't have accommodated all of that. They were perfectly willing to work -- even the Jebhey-e Melli <National Front> would have been happy to work within the regime, provided that it was ... there was a commitment to constitutionalism.

But the religious factor became evident to me in 1962 and '63, when Khomeini emerged -- because I was there. In fact, I wrote a report on Khomeini when SAVAK entered the mosques in Qom and killed some of the mullahs, were bashing their brains out against the wall -- or that was the charge. And

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then there was the march towards Tehran. And the various charges that were made: the inheritance from land reform, changing the mores of women, the Shah's authoritarianism, I guess was the third, and the last one was the status of forces -- against the Americans.

And when he was arrested, and all of the violence broke out, and Tehran was where there were several thousand people killed. I was there when the tanks were firing at the univer<sity> ... I was almost killed myself. Because I was caught in one of these gunfire battles. And for several days there were machine-guns going on throughout Tehran. It was a pretty serious matter.

But, I also recall very vividly the sense that the tanks were American tanks, and the bullets were American bullets. And that one of the issues was status of forces, of United States soldiers. I mean it was a ....

And the sense from the secular people -- you didn't think of people as secular or religious at that point, because there were many people who were religious. It was not seen as an alien division. But at any rate, the National Front had nothing to do with this uprising. It was something else. I mean, it was unique. And it was ...

And I recall being told at the time by my friends that this was different. This was the masses. Something they had never seen before. So, if one had to trace, I suppose, mass political participation, the beginnings might be there. I suppose they might have been in the mob moments in the period of Mossadegh, I don't know. But certainly, in Khomeini's time, the great difference is mass politics.

But aside from that -- that moment with Khomeini -- the time was very peaceful. And the efforts, even in the most -- what were regarded then as the most extreme politics -- were really accommodationist. There was nothing seriously entertained, by any groups that I was aware of, of the Shah not being a part of the equation. And the sadness is that there was so much good will, on every side, from everywhere.

And there was so much hope, and beauty, and so much attractive was going on -- in every direction: women's rights, and universities were blooming everywhere, the health was improving, the villages were ... their way of life was beginning to be better, and archaeology and a sense of the past, and .... And even in religion itself, there was .... what I mentioned earlier, the restoration of the mosques -- this wasn't simply physical, it was, you know, it was an act

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of piety, in a way.

These were things that even bureaucrats thought it was a good thing to do. Not simply because it would bring tourism, or ... but because they themselves were religious. Everybody in Iran is religious to some extent. Even those who are atheists.

Q. Even the Shah himself.

A. Yes. Yes. And that's a point I think is very important to make. At least at that point there really was no distinction between secular and religious. The Iranian was religious. I mean, to what degree depended on who you were, but ... what kind of life you had led, but ...

The best example, I thought, of the sense of enlightenment in the religious field, were people like your namesake, Mehdi Haeri-Yazdi, who was the son of an ayatollah. He was twelve years the secretary of Khomeini. He's a Ph.D. from Toronto University in Religion and Philosophy, and he was a professor at Tehran University, so the ... And he had no ... his friends were some of the most outrageous, westernized people, as well as clerics, and there was no difficulty. Everyone's family has some mullah in it, somewhere.



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Anyway ....

Q. Let me ask you this question which is very much related to what we have been ... or what you have been describing. I would like to ask you to begin describing your <?> -- not really describe, but let me just read you the questions.

I'd like you to describe your experience with Iran and Iranian political figures, in as much detail as possible. And please begin with your first position related to Iran and end with your most recent responsibilities covering Iran. In recounting your Iran-related career, please describe in detail those events in which you participated or witnessed that will give future researchers a full understanding of Iranian history.

A. That's a ... I mean, that's a profoundly political question, in the sense of ... I think I would have to say first that my involvement with Iran is of no real consequence. It was of great consequence to me. But ... those things that I did as far as relations between the United States and Iran had no significance of any long-term value. And I'm not sure that, except for those who were involved in 1953, there were many American events that are of



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very profound consequence.

No, I'd have to add those who ..., at the time of the end of the Shah, I think those were profound moments, too. There were lots of little moments along the way where other things might have happened.

No, I think I had a very ... very good understanding of a number of the key personalities in the time that I was there. But there was nothing unique, or profound in that. It's that I think I understood the purposes, general purposes, of people like Ali Amini, and various prime ministers at the time. But I don't think that's very important, because that's only the surface of things.

It's that if I have any contribution, it's in recognizing the dynamism of emerging groups in Iran, who were really of my own age, my own generation. And paying attention to belief-systems, and the relationship of learning to action. The importance of that to international relations is important, but ... And I wrote about it. And I wrote, I think, in the hindsight of history, accurately. But I can't say I had much effect, except for those who like to wring their hands afterwards. So the influence of being able to change things was minimal.

Only during the Kennedy period -- the Kennedy White House itself was very interested in Iran because of Bobby Kennedy. And the president himself. Bobby Kennedy had been in Iran, with Justice Douglas, as a traveller.

Q. I didn't know that.

A. Yea. And he liked Iran. He found the people attractive, and the country exciting, and .... The student groups in the United States apparently came to him, and said, "Look, there's no political freedom. Help us." And so on and so forth. And the Kennedy administration was of that view, that there should be an opening up of the political scene. In the White House, in the National Security Council of that time, there were Middle East officers who had a sense of this.

But, in the long-term looking at sensitivity and awareness of the details of Iran at the highest levels, there was none. They made the mistake of identifying Iran with the Shah. They knew the Shah well. And they saw the Shah. And they saw Ardeshir Zahedi. And the equivalents. They had no understanding whatsoever of everyone else. Or the great capacities, and...

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They didn't understand what the students were demonstrating about. They only heard the irritation. They only saw the histrionics, rather than trying to understand the message.

But that's a problem for any highly-centralized government, even a democratic government, is the leaders, if they don't know the details of a situation, are left with simplicities and simplifications.

There were always, .... In my case, I was able to talk to people. I talked to George Ball, when he was undersecretary of state, and I had some influence in the Senate, when I was there. And in the State Department. But the dominant view was ... the Shah had weathered all of these difficulties, and he had come into his own, and was feeling confident -- let him have his way.

Q. Were you, when you were in Iran, in the embassy, in the presence of the ambassador, did you ever have audience with the Shah?

A. Oh yes. Oh, yes, a number of times. Sure. In fact, sure -- a number of times, but ....

Q. Could you describe <unclear>?

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A. Well, they were very formal, and they were intelligent exchanges of information and views. They often had to do with formal transactions, such as treaties, and ... the exchange of notes, and things of that ... formal diplomacy. And the real opportunities for deep political discussions in that kind of framework were very difficult ... few.

And usually doubts or new ideas or questions are conveyed in the diplomatic world through subordinates. And the chances for frank, civilized discussions depend on factors which are very seldom attained. While there were lots of meetings, that doesn't mean that much ... beyond the business....

There was a lot of business between the Shah and the United States.

The Shah would meet regularly with the ambassador. He would meet regularly with other officials, and .... But they had a lot to do. They were buying weapons, or selling them, and they were ... going through the intricacies of not stationing nuclear weapons ... in Iran ... on Iran's territory. They were talking about bases, or ... you know, all the business of governments.

But it's seldom that you talk about fundamental questions,

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and ... that's too bad. In a way, you have to grow up with that. I'm of the view that, in international affairs, it's something like .... To be effective, you really have to have modern equivalents to the kinds of relationships you had in earlier, less complicated, or, when the world was smaller -- certainly as complicated -- where the families knew each other, who were ruling. They understood their character, and they grew up with one another. They weren't constantly faced with tabula rasa situations.

And in diplomacy, or international affairs, our leaders really have to know one another. And they have to know the generations, and .... On the American side, certainly, we've had great absence of that. Our leaders, particularly at the top, are woefully ignorant of many of these areas. Not always, but .... I think it would help if they studied in the same universities throughout the world, and did some of the same things together.

You know, understand that it would make things easier, in certain cases. I mean, clearly the successes of diplomats are due to long-term relationships. They never succeed if they've never met one another. There's a certain trust that's involved.

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And I would say that part of the antipathy of Khomeini and the United States is that he didn't know any Americans, and they didn't know him. So there's no .... He thought of them as some alien beast. And they think of him as some alien creature ....

No. When I was in Iran, I had a chance to see, not only the Shah and the ministers of Court, the major .... prime ministers and foreign ministers, and the Arsanjanis of the -- there was one Arsanjani -- governors-general, and landlords, and the major families, and so on.

What resulted from that was something, I think, of some awareness of how Iran was put together. And that I tried to make my judgments on what I saw happening in Iran from its own structure. And I have to say I was very sympathetic. I found Iran an attractive place, in so many ways. Friends. Physically -- the climate is wonderful. The civilization, I thought, was an extremely subtle and sensitive one. The Iranian notion of beauty I found very attractive.

There was every reason for Americans and Iranians to be friends. I mean, I may have used the personal fallacy of equating personal likes with national preferences, but I think it was our national preference as well. And certainly



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our national interest, as far as the question of strategic landscape and oil. Which became more important to the United States as time went on. It wasn't important at first. It was of no importance in 1953 -- oil, that is. But it became so.

Q. When you say you got to know Iran within its own system and structure, how do you mean by that? I mean, if we may take the case of the White Revolution, or Arsenjani's activities at that time. What observations do you have?

A. Well, I knew a lot about the villages of Iran, because I had spent a lot of time in the villages. And all over the country. And I had seen good villages, bad villages, ... villages on the margins, just, of productivity, villages that were abused by landlords, and villages that had been wonderfully enhanced by landlords. I'd seen villages that were already owned by the villagers. You know, it was extraordinarily complicated.

And I thought that .... There was no opposition. The idea that it was a revolution was nonsense. I mean, it was happening. It was happening in any number of ways. The big landowners had gotten out of land, anyway. The big money, so to speak, in Iran, was not in land. Many families had gotten



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out of landowning and had gone to industry and investment and other forms of making fortunes.

Villages were kept by the former landowning classes as ... almost as sentimentalities ... they loved them. It was a way of life that they enjoyed. It was a quieter life. They were certainly not in it for the profit. They were .... In certain parts of Iran, there were people who were in the old way, but they were diminishing. And even there, there were reforms of agriculture ... and, human rights, you might say, or bettering the life of the villager, was having an effect.

And I was quite convinced that the cadastral problems had been -- Abolhasan Ebteha) convinced me of this -- that the cadastral problems were so complicated and enormous, that the brutal simplicity of the Shah's land reform was wrong. And that the <?> problem was ... as a legal matter was much too complicated to handle the way they did. I thought that was a huge mistake. That one had to ... one could not ... mess around with inheritance that cavalierly, and one couldn't use the argument that so-and-so, the landlord, hadn't paid taxes, and therefore should be evaluated on tax actually paid. You know, that was ... sort of a cheap shot, in a sense.

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But the general idea in land reform, of having land owned by those who farm it, is a perfectly sound proposition. But there were complications. And those complications made a difference.

But on the whole, I think even the suddenness of the Shah's land reform could have worked out, had they paid attention to <?>, had they paid attention to the differences in villages. And had they worried about the "khoanashin", the dispossessed. Who very quickly became the urban poor that overthrew the regime.

But even that, I think, was manageable. Because in the Plan Organization, where agriculture was the least valued of all of the areas of support, they began to understand that that was critically important, even though required time-frames were way beyond their usual schedules. They could see building a cement-factory in three or four years, but changing the quality of life in a remote village would take 30. And they had no capacity to plan for long-term.

The Literacy Corps was a fine idea -- to bring ... students out -- urban students -- into the countryside to learn their own country. But it was like our own Peace Corps, which ... the greatest benefit is to the people who go to the country,

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not ... they really don't bring much to the village itself.

But even in that area, there were many projects that were far more sensibly run -- and run by the Royal Family, you know, with the assistance of people like Ashraf in the late stages, where they were working in Lurestan, and so on. And they were doing solid work. They were carefully surveyed and well-financed, and they became model projects.

But the biggest failing, of course, was political participation. And all of the mistakes that were made were easily overcome if everyone says, "We're part of the mistake." I mean, what became evident at the end was that all mistakes were due to the Shah. I mean, that's the way it turned out. There was only one person to blame ... because everyone else had been excluded. That's a great tragedy.

Q. If we may go back to part of your area of observations about Iran and your own career, what were some of the respon<sibilities> ... your responsibilities when you left Esfahan and you went to Tehran?

A. Well, my main responsibilities in Esfahan were, as ... was to learn about Iran. I was at the bottom of the diplomatic ladder, and it was my first post, and I was given

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enormous responsibility. But ... the ... my duties really were to learn. And in Tehran, I was to help the ambassador -- in everything from the mundane things of diplomacy, like protocol and preparation of messages and things of that sort, to political reporting.

But in Tehran itself, my main duties were political activities in Iran. So it was the political landscape, whatever it was. Most of the embassy functions were divided, as in every embassy in the world: first you do foreign office contacts, then you have economic analysis of, you know, production of steel-mills, cotton-mills, just gazetteer kind of work. And my task was to be ... to learn and be conscious of what was happening politically. Which was wonderful.

So, it was simply a matter of trying to understand what was happening, and to do analysis of that. And Iran at that point was totally open, and there was no inhibition. There was certainly, in my view, no necessity for clandestine kinds of things, except, I suppose, the wars that spies have with each other, and things of that sort. And, of course, the Soviet problem, and whatever.

But politics itself was open. There was no reluctance to talk about it. Even with the presence of SAVAK. And my

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activities ... I mean, I spent a lot of time with people who were in the opposition to the Shah, so-called. And the Shah knew about it, and ... I suppose on one occasion was upset. But there was nothing ... nothing that really was a problem.

Q. During the span of time you spent in Iran, from the time you went to Esfahan til the time you left Iran, how did your observations change about the country, and the people, and the politics, and the political figures? If they changed at all.

A. Well, it did change, obviously, over time. I had one ... My first contacts with Iran were for five years that I was there. And then I came back every few years in the course of other things. And it fell out that I saw Iran every few years. So it was a good way of seeing what had happened. Because I had so many Iranian friends, they would visit and stay with us, in the United States.

And I had a lot of correspondents. And, as a scholarly pursuit, I was very interested in Iran, anyway. And I did some writing on village "dowrehs", and things like that, but....

I think Iran became more and more authoritarian .... In the

period when I first came to know it, 1959 -- even though in 1959 there was ... all political activity was banned, and this stemmed from the Mossadegh period -- still, it was a very lively political climate. Because people were testing ideas. It was a time of frameworks. Among the political scientists -- that world.

The basic framework, I would say, when I came, was western. Recognizably so. I'm not saying that it wasn't Iranian, but I'm saying that the idea of pluralism -- put it that way -- was very strong. That pluralism offered the best approach to having an ideal society.

By the late '60s, Marxist models were in vogue. In fact, in the early '60s I never heard any Marxist language, no dialectics or ... except in philosophical talk. And they would know that it was Hegelian, or it was Marxist, or it was Communist. They would know that. But by the late '60s, everyone talked in Marxist terminology, including the religious people. And no one talked in terms of constitutionalism or ... except for the Jebhey-e Melli <National Front>, because that's the only way they talked. They had abandoned that. They were talking about Maoist ... the argument was whether Maoism was better than Stalinism. And there were various shades of ... all of that nonsense.



Whereas, in the mid-'60s, there was talk of ... that the American model was not possible because Iran wasn't rich enough. And the Indian model was the approach. Because it's the village structure. It's that Iran's future lay in a village-oriented government and society.

And with oil, the Indian model disappeared. But it also disappeared with democracy. Democracy as an approach among the intellectuals. In the writings that I would see and the talk that I would hear, it was out. They were talking about rejecting the Mossadegh approach of gradualism, and they had to become guerillas, urban guerillas.

So, in the late '60s and '70s, I began to hear the talk of ... "Our fathers failed. Look what it's got them -- prison, humiliation. They're nothings." And these are their sons, the sons of these very people, saying, "We have to become guerillas. We have to take matters into our own hands. They don't ... they'll listen to ... force." And the obvious models, I suppose, are the romantic guerillas of the ... you know, Castro, Che Guevara, and the ..., and, I suppose, a lot of Maoist literature and terminology -- and mythology creeps in.



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But the rejection -- the whole rejection of the West -- was something that was evident by the end of the '60s. And the real moment, I think, comes at the coronation. And I don't know when the time of ... what's his ...? Is it Ahmadi, the west-toxification...?

Q. General Ahmadi. Jalal Ali Ahmadi.

A. I think it's about that west-struckness <?>, that's what it is, yes.

Q. <unclear>.

A. And that was a terrible thing, I thought. Among my closest friends that ... they ... as much as they would have preferred the pluralist approach, they thought it was beyond their capacity and control. That it had passed to the more violent stage.

But were you aware of these things yourself?

Q. Some, yes. ....early '60s, late '60s....

A. Late '60s, yeh.

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Q. You mentioned that you were present at the time of the uprising in 1963. What were some of your observations? You said you were actually in the streets. What were some of your observations, politically, and also personally?

A. Well, the first one is obviously of danger. Because this was a very serious matter. Here Iranians were killing Iranians. They were killing their own people. The military was killing its own people. This was the armed forces being used against their own people.

Q. With American-made ...?

A. With American-made weapons. And, not only that, but they were firing bullets near me, very near to me.

Q. American bullets against you?

A. That's right. Not only killing my friends, but killing me, perhaps. But no, it was senseless.

Q. Did you actually see anybody killed?

A. Yes. At the university. Yeh. And I saw the tanks at work. You know, spinning on their tracks, and .... Not a

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good thing. No.

Maybe it was accidental, but I lived downtown, anyway -- or the middle of town, at that point, which was in a little kuche of Takht-e Jamshid. It was an old 19th century house, and it had a hose that had been made into a pool, and a ... huge garden, for Tehran, that part of Tehran. It had khormalou (persimmon) and thousands of roses -- it was a beautiful garden. In fact, after we left, some friends liked it so much, they moved in. Yes, it was a lovely old house.

Q. <unclear>

A. Yes.

Q. What was the reaction of the American embassy towards the uprising? How was that perceived there?

A. Well, as I think I indicated earlier, there was: "What is it?" They wanted to know what had happened, who were these people, and why. And as I told you, we were able to tell them who they were and what they were concerned about. But the embassy tended to look -- and Washington tended to look -- on it as a fanatic uprising. And indeed it was. I mean, the

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people who marched in shrouds were fanatics. But they were able to stir up a lot of people who were not, that is, the mass-mob kind of action. And it represented dissatisfaction with a number of things, and that there was discontent.

But, because it was put down so forcefully -- literally, with force -- this seemed to be regarded as a sign of strength. That it shows the man has guts to face .... And things were quiet. Khomeini was exiled. The whole notion of something like the time of General -- oh goodness, the one who was assassinated by the Fada'iyan in the '50s,...

Q. ... Mansour? No.

A. No, no.

Q. Razmara?

A. Razmara. Yes. That image, I think was raised historically. And of course, the assassination of Mansour was another.... Again, that was by a religious fanatic group, with deep relationships with the bazaar. It was again seen as fringe, you know, not mainstream. And I think, from the point of view of 1963, it was fringe. And it was ... didn't represent mainstream thinking in Iran. It was a

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desperate action on the part of a very small group that had been deeply offended by something that was terribly unjust. The sense of justice was very much at issue, but the connection between something the fanatic groups saw as unjust, and injustice generally, was never made.

Then, I suppose, within the Iranian groups itself, at that point, the political groups did not join with the uprising. Because they didn't know where it was until it had happened. They had no part in it. It wasn't their uprising. And it was force. They were not people of violence.

And I suppose, you know, looking for parallels and so on, the force used by the religious fanatics and the force used by the military, by the regime, are parallel. I mean, it was ... drawing the battle brought them into contention -- and power. So, ... and the group that did not have force at its command, or chose not to use it, <was> out of it. So the groups that were for dialogue, and votes, and constitutional rule, were simply not a factor -- in the realities of Iran. You had to have the power of the gun. And, I suppose, that's what the urban guerillas were saying. They had come to that conclusion.

Q. In a span of ten years?

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A. In a span of ten years. And rejected their fathers. I mean, that's.... Isn't that what happened?

Q. Uh huh.

A. Not to mention their grandfathers.

Q. <unclear>

I'd like to go back to a comment you made earlier, about wars of the spies within the country. Could you ....

A. Oh, that's overly dramatic. That simply refers to ... all of the nations of the earth have spies, and a lot of their work is to keep track of themselves. And it's .... Who is spying on whom? And for what reasons? But that's all that is meant by that. Nothing profound.

Q. No. I was wondering whether there were spies within the Iranian government. Like the SAVAK, and then the counterspies.

A. Oh, yea. But that's the Iranian structure, governmental structure, being slightly paranoid. Watching the watchers --

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in ways that were hardly encouraging to those being watched. There was no mutual trust, it would seem. And the ultimate moment, I would think, is when Fardoust betrays the Shah. The man closest to him. Entrusted with the supervision of all of that. But ... Yes. There doesn't seem to be much mutual trust -- at the end.

But, again, I can't stress enough how up to the mid-'60s the willingness to accept was there, on the part of, I think, almost all elements of society, including the religious. Do you think that's wrong, or...?

Q. Are you asking me?

A. Yes.

Q. No. Actually, I'm quite interested in that, because I think these are very good observations. This was when I was growing up <unclear>.

A. Well, I was growing up too.

Q. <unclear>.

A. No, literally.



Q. Nobody ever questioned ... you know, the legitimacy of the Shah's power. But that, you know, they were asking for some democratic Nehzat-e Melli, some channels to participate and express ... <unclear> And it's very sad, you know.

A. It is sad. There was so much to be done, and he couldn't possibly do it. It was out of his capacity -- of anyone's capacity -- to do what he reserved to himself.

Q. You mentioned something about ... the deadline for the debts. Did America not want to extend the deadline?

A. It was a technical argument, the whole business of refinancing loans, in order to .... The World Bank sets, imposes, says: "All right, we'll roll over the debt, if you do certain reforms: cut back on this, and cut back on that." And they argue about parts of those things. And governments tend to object to certain provisions as an infringement on sovereignty or personal pride, or something like that.

And it became a point of principle. And the point of principle really turned on whether there was confidence in Amini or not.

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Q. Whose confidence? America's confidence?

A. Yes. The Americans ... were reflecting on a technical level the bank's view, the neutral bankers and planners, and so on and so forth, looking at it from ... if they were trying to get their loans paid on time. It was that kind of thing. And what happens is, there's usually give-and-take, and they say, "Well, he's a good fellow, and he's doing good things, and the economy will rise. And you'll get your money better that way, if you give him some freedom." I think that was the issue.

Q. Did the government collapse after that <?> was not extended?

A. Yes. And the programs that were at issue -- I can't even remember what they were at the time -- they were important to Amini, but what it really meant was: "Trust me." And it also meant: "Trust my planners." And it also meant: "Trust the parliament which is coming in. Trust the new elections." That's what it really meant.

Q. Did the Americans <unclear> not trust anyone?

A. They didn't even understand the ramifications of it.

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They saw it as Amini/Shah.

Q. Well, why didn't they <unclear> ? Wasn't Amini working for the Shah?

A. Oh, yes. But it became a part of the .... The Shah, at that point, was very concerned that ... about his personal power. And Amini was responding to the cry from lots of groups, including the National Front, but it was way beyond that, which was: "Reign, not rule!" And the prime minister must have control over economic affairs. And he must appoint his own ministers. So it was that assertion of independence. And the Shah was saying, "No."

In fact, one of the budget-items, I think, at issue, had to do with arms -- defence -- cut down on defence, raise agriculture .... I can't remember. But it was a priorities question. And it was also an independence question -- of the role of the prime minister. This was very revolutionary. There was no free parliament. And the Shah selected every single candidate in both parties that ran, and ... even then there was an argument.

Q. <unclear>

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A. Yes. He was. And, of course, he was distrusted by others, because he worked with the Shah, and there were suspicions of the Qajars, and all of that. And he'd been around a long time, had made enemies, naturally. But he was a remarkable figure, I thought. Amazing. Vitality and flexibility -- as some saw it, too much, perhaps .... But he was .... I think he understood the Americans, too. He was able to work with them. Because he'd been using ... he spoke English, as well as French, had been an ambassador, and so on. So it was a crucial point.

But the irony is that some of those who made the decision weren't aware of its crucial nature. Had it been reduced to the simplicities of: "Do you stick with the Shah or not?" ... it never needed to be placed in those terms. When it was placed in those terms, American policy-makers, by habit, just simply ... Because they would write these pieces that would say, "After the Shah, what?" And they'd come up with no answer, naturally. "There's no alternative to the Shah," they would say. As though out of a country of 45 million people, there weren't people of extraordinary ability.

Q. Did the Shah himself give that impression -- that the Americans had to choose between him and ...?

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A. Yes. Yes. And it's perfectly understandable. In an egocentric world, that's the way you pose your problems. Where there are no institutions to depersonalize it, you become egocentric or ad hominem. It's all personality-oriented, rather than institution. And the whole idea of institution-building is to get away from those traps. To the extent that you can. We haven't succeeded in this country, but ...

Q. You're trying..

A. We try, yes. We try.

Q. Well, thank you.



# HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIRECTOR: HABIB LAJJEVARDI  
PROCESSING SUPERVISOR: ZIA SEDGHI  
TRANSCRIBER: MARGARET DUBOIS

NARRATOR: WILLIAM G. MILLER

DATE OF INTERVIEW: MARCH 7, 1985

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: MEDFORD, MA

INTERVIEWER: SHAHLA HAERI

TAPE No.: 3

RESTRICTIONS: NO QUOTATION WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE NARRATOR

23-10-87

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: William G. Miller

Date: March 7, 1985

Place: Medford, MA

Interviewer: Shahla Haeri

Tape no: 3

I suppose, because of the positions I had, over the 25 years or so with Iran, that I've seen most, if not all, of the leaders of Iran. And I've kept ... I've had the chance to see and keep in touch with a number of them -- all the way through.

Q. Still?

A. Yes. But, the reasons are -- I just like them. I admire them in some ways. Their children are the friends of my children, or .... My two sons were born in Iran, and ... so we've seen a family grow up. So I've been selective in that way. And officially, I've seen the ... until the end of the regime, the Shah and his group when they have come to

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Washington. Or in Iran, when we went on trips there. and had a chance to see what they were doing, what they looked like, and what their views have been.

So I'd have to say that my involvement has been official and formal and purely personal and accidental. I couldn't get away from the involvement if I wanted to, so ....

But the people I found extraordinarily interesting -- because they are -- are people like Ebtehaaj and Amini, who had so many sides to them. Just as human beings, they're such interesting people. And demonstrated such marvellous characteristics of human behavior.

But there's such a variety. My closest friends are my own age, or a little older. Habib knows them. It includes people like Cyrus Ghani, who's .... We are very close friends, but our friendship is based on Shakespeare, and it's based on baseball and American politics, and collecting books, for.... He has the greatest private collection in the world of Iranian books -- I don't know if you know that.

Q. <unclear>

A. It's in New York and London. Yeh, I think it is the

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best. I think I spurred him to start it, because I have a pretty good collection, myself. It's no longer anywhere near as good as his.

Q. I have <?> too.

A. Oh. Well, maybe you're the best. I don't know. And he collects miniatures, and so on. He's way out of my league in those things, but, again we share a lot. And there are people...

Well, like -- I don't know what's happened to your namesake, Haeri-Yazdi?

Q. He's out of favor.

A. Well, I'm sure he's out of favor. But he's ... I just found him an absolutely delightful human being, a man of great learning and great humor, I thought -- a terribly funny man. And then, Shaul Bakhash, and ...

Q. Shaul Bakhash?

A. And Haleh, his wife. We had a "doreh" in Iran. We used to see each other -- about nine or ten people -- it was an

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interesting grouping of families from all over: some of the Farmanfarmaiane, and people from Shiraz and Esfahan, and so on.

And I know Shapour Bakhtiar, and ... his group: Mirfendereski and Boroumand, of course, who is a close friend.

But it's mainly because I like them. It's nothing more complicated than that. But there are people like Daryoush Homayoun, who I like enormously; I've always liked Daryoush, because I think he's a brilliant mind and an absolute dispassionate analyst. He has the marvellous ability to see accurately, and even if he himself is doing the opposite. And he knows that he's doing the opposite, and .... And he's an interesting human being, very interesting.

And I even find Ardeshir Zahedi and those people interesting, too.

Q. Did you know Zahedi personally?

A. Oh, yes. And Daryoush's wife is Zahedi's sister. That marriage is late, ....

But these things come in stages. You know, there are very

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different levels. There are little people, you know, as far as prestige or power, in Esfahan, and so on, that we're very devoted to.

Q. What are some of your observations of the political events that took place at that particular time when you were in Iran? You know, certain things happened. It would be interesting if you said something about the local politics, or the tension between the local politics and the central government, if you have any observations on that?

A. Oh, there was a great deal of tension. All of the intricacies of political activities were obviously closely understood by anyone who was interested, including the king and people in the Court. They would know in detail about so-and-so, whether he was a Saleh or Sadighi or Bazargan, they would know what they were doing. It was a compulsion. And whatever it was they were doing, they didn't like it, because they were doing something.

It was a threat because .... I think, psychologically, probably, because of the relationship to Mossadegh. Someone who had risen above and displaced. Anything that related to that was somehow a defeat. It's related to a defeat -- or a humiliation -- and that has to be part of the explanation.

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And in human terms, that's always difficult to overcome. The revenge and the sense of insecurity that a loss of that kind brings upon a man is never really overcome. That has to explain some of it. But even the people who had nothing to do with that ... anyone who was not in a subservient position was a threat. Any kind of independence that was not submissive. That became a characteristic. So there was certainly a deep ....

<telephone>

But the intricacies of the first parties after ... in '59 and in '60, the Melliyoun Party and -- goodness, what was the other?

Q. Mardon?

A. Mardon, Melliyoun. Yes. And how people decided whether they would be a Mardon or a ....

Q. <unclear>

A. Right. But I think the answer to your initial question is that this was an era of personal politics. Literally,

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they were the persons. There was never the idea of large voting blocks organized in anything that looked like a party. It was only evident in about 1963, when the National Front had a congress, in which they put forth a platform, and they had the spectrum of views from Bazargan to, I suppose ... who would be furthest on the left? I suppose Forouhar was the furthest on the left at that point. Only because he had been a labor minister, I suppose. Along with Bakhtiar, but he was not as far left, because he was a tribal person, so.... Then Sadighi and Saleh and the middle-of-the-road types.

But their numbers, as far as political organization, was only in the thousands. And they were mostly university and professional people.

And certainly the Rastakhiz or Mansour's efforts were nothing. I mean, there was nothing. They were only behind a personality, and they were there because there was nothing else. This wasn't a structure. Although the idea of taking advantage of the technocrats and the educated seemed to be a solidifying force. It was a natural grouping anyway.

So really, all through the period, until the urban guerillas, was personality -- individuals. And they were easy to keep track of, I suppose, by the Shah. But, in saying that, there



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was very little engagement between them, even though there were attempts at discussions, usually on matters of imprisonment. But ... so you'd have to say there was no political life at all -- except those things that people would occasionally have at great risk. Until they'd decide to go underground, completely. And it's a pity.

Q. What were some of the issues that were of concern to the Esfahanis and to the politicians in Esfahan, that were not in accordance with, you know, the views, the issues, that were discussed in Tehran? I mean, what were some of the major points of contention between the politicians of the two cities?

A. Well, I think the major feeling was that Tehran was extracting from Esfahan money, and they were getting nothing in return, and that they were interfering with their own control and growth, and so on. It was an old -- they were old arguments, that the Esfahanis know better than Tehran what to do in Esfahan, and if they'd leave us alone we'd be richer, and everyone would be happier. But let our own people do it.

And so politically the argument became: "Let Esfahanis represent Esfahan in Tehran. Don't impose from Tehran. Let

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us be involved. We have issues which we can speak to ourselves, and we'd like to be a part of the government." And their, you know, their own tradition of being involved in the Constitutional Revolution.

And the idea of distinctness -- that they're different. And you find that everywhere in Iran, anyway. They're proud of being from somewhere else. And that's good. There's nothing wrong with that.

But, as far as the arguments of state, high policy, international relations, I don't ... the Esfahanis didn't worry about that. They had views, but ... those were not the questions. The questions really had to do with their own ... about their involvement in politics ... they concerned themselves. And that was a common issue, throughout Iran, I thought.

And to choose their own leaders, you know, let them make their own judgments about who should represent them.... I suppose it was again that sense of trust and law-abiding .... The idea of Tehran-imposed <?> was certainly ... difficult. But that wasn't a major question. It was a structural one, but not an intellectual one.

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When you pose the question that way, it reduces the gravity of the questions really to a few -- just to one. Which is participation. That seems to be the major question. It was: "Why don't you let us participate in our destiny? Why don't you trust us?" And it's the dignity, I suppose, the question: "Why can't we be a part of the same thing without being subservient?" The uprightness of ....

Q. Would you be involved with any of the major political figures ... well, first in Esfahan? Could you mention those...?

A. Yea. Sure.

Q. And also, may I ask you to describe some of your observations?

A. Well, they were so-called major political figures because they were major ... they were from major families or occupations or ... they were the natural leaders, given the society. And what that implies is not simply having a genealogy they can trace, but having a fortune, money, and taking advantage of their position to ... with a certain vitality. They do reflect vitality.

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In the old ... the last shreds of the previous dynasty, the Qajars, was Saran Adolleh.

Q. Saran Adolleh?

A. Yes. He was ... a governor. He was the ostandar <governor> of Esfahan under the Qajars. And he was still alive. He was thought to be very pro-British. A man about whom there were many tales: that he had murdered his mother, or caused his mother to be murdered in his sight. Terribly brutal and rapacious, but you would never know it. He was the most elegant, courteous, civilized human being you would ever meet. And remarkably talented children, some of whom became murderers, some of whom were great social workers in the community.

Q. Murderers?

A. Yes. One of the sons was a murderer, yes, murdered .... Again, it was a ... you know, murdering his wife or something like that. But, you know, people of enormous scale.

Then there were the Nikpay -- you know Gholam-Reza, who was shot by the Khomeini group, the mayor. His father, Izzat, was a minister in Qavam-ol-Saltaneh's government. And he was

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related -- he was a Qajar, of course, and in the ... orbit of the old ways -- a lovely old house. A few villages that were just beautiful beyond belief. And married at the age of 75 a Swiss wife of about 20. It was a real love affair -- it was interesting. They were very fond of each other. He was very kind. And he sought to show me the old Iran. It was a lovely, beautiful experience.

But major families were those with new energy, out of the bazaar: the Amin family, Reza Amin. His father, Hadji Amin, was a bazaari of the old style, but very elegant in the old way. And Reza, of course, was a nuclear physicist. And a man of great competence and ability. They were a prominent family and invested well: a cement factory, and other factories of one kind or another.

And there were various relatives around that nexus. There were all the Kazerounis, who had various mills, and so on. There were dirty Kazerounis and clean Kazerounis.

Q. <unclear>

A. But all of these families were involved in politics in one way or another. Because it was ... because they were the dominant, most powerful people just by income and activity

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and so on. And they were close to the mullahs -- even the dummy Imam Jo'meh appointed by the ... who was not the most important mullah, obviously, in any city, but .... They all had their relationships, they would make contributions to the mosques, for the upkeep, and for the poor, and things of this sort. Or for the roze-h and the mourning parades and all of that. I saw all of that in Esfahan.

Q. <unclear>?

A. Sure. <unclear> and the great Hosseiniye <?> business, which is....

Q. <unclear> all these processions?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. I mean, these important families also participated?

A. They would pay for it. No. Their servants would participate, but no. They'd watch. And the wives would go and mourn at the roze-h.

But I thought it was beautiful. I was interested to ... And they took great pride in doing it well. As a ritual it was

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very, very interesting.

And then, seeing them in the villages was interesting, too, because there were variations -- all kinds of other stories would creep in, usually from Shahnameh. They'd be totally un-Islamic ....

Q. Was there ever a time when you had conflicting <?> feelings about what was going on, or your own perception about the situation in Iran, and what the American embassy or ambassador seemed to be doing?

A. Oh, yes, almost all the time. Yes. My view was that it was in the American interest to encourage the Shah to open up and to accept the ..., particularly the western-educated groups. There was every reason to do that. They were the most competent. They were pro-western. They were law-abiding. They were constitutional. There was every argument for doing it, and it was insane not to.

And the counter-argument was: it's not our country; the Shah is in control; we don't know enough about what would happen if he lost control -- the Communists might take over; and so on and so forth, so .... It was dealing ... it was an argument of saying: "It's easy to deal with what we have. We



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know this quantity, and there are uncertainties that would be at risk."

And my argument would go further, that ... in a countering to this, to say: "Well, you do know what's happening. The country's changing. These are different people than their fathers. They have enormous capacity. If it's not used constructively, it'll be used destructively. And if you really believe in democracy, and since we are so heavily involved, it isn't a case of 'we're just observers.' We are partially responsible, because of the chain of events, some of which were not of our choosing, but we have a role. We have influence.

"By doing nothing, that's a choice. It isn't ... it has consequences -- to do nothing. Whereas Italy is simply there as a ... it doesn't matter what they think. And if they do nothing, it doesn't matter. But if we do something or do nothing, it does matter in Iran."

And at that point, it was certainly true. And I think it was true right up until the end. So my view was that we should be unafraid of saying what we believe in, and encourage the Shah to move in those directions. And that it was nothing ... that it did not have serious risks. That it would

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strengthen the relationship.

But ... I think the other view prevailed because of a lack of knowledge of Iran. And the ... unwillingness to risk going into areas they didn't know about.

So my position was that all the way through -- right to the end, because I was asked in Carter's time, when I was in the Senate, to ... what my views were. I told them -- the same message. I said, "You can't be for human rights unless you're for political participation of people who believe in human rights." He said, well .... And again, the response was -- it was a complicated one -- was that we have to deal through the Shah.

The Carter administration was in great difficulty because the people who were most involved in the Middle East, that is, Vance and ... were sympathetic, you know. I think Vance was sympathetic to opening up the political process in Iran. He was busy with the Arab-Israeli dispute. And so was the assistant secretary, Saunders, who was also very sympathetic. And Brzezinski....

So the old habit of saying: "The Shah is the way" was simply followed. And the Shah and Carter personally got along, I

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guess. Just the way heads of state tend to, because they're heads of state.

And the Shah was a very attractive man, in many ways. I found him so. He was ... a man of many accomplishments. An interesting person, in many ways. And he would be, I would think, to most people. And an attractive wife, and ... a lot of economic ... He was the economic wonder of the world.

Q. The world?

A. Yeh. Well, now -- I've just been to the United Arab Emirates, several times. What's happened there is unbelievable. I went to ... I saw Abu Dhabi in 1960, from a dhow -- mud huts. And now it's the most spectacular city -- beyond any place on earth. There's no poverty. The society's totally transformed -- all within 10 years. And still ruled by the Sheikhs.

Q. But those Sheikhs seem to be ... wiser.

A. Some of them are, yes. But it's, you know, it's only 10 years. And everyone has ... it's the highest per capita income in the world, and everyone has a Mercedes, and -- at least one Mercedes -- an air-conditioned house, and the

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children are going to university. They still have camels. No one works. It's a rentier society. What's going to happen?

I mean, it's everything that happened in Iran as far as the boom, but squeezed in 10 years. It happened in Iran over 70 years, the change.

Q. Were you disillusioned with American policies in Iran?

A. Disillusioned .... Well, I'd thought that we were making a very large ... a huge mistake. And I won't say "disillusioned," I was terribly disappointed that they didn't see it the way I saw it. But I have to think it was my own failure to persuade that had something to do with it. But, no, I think it's a very human, what happened. Because ... it's a very American: if it works, don't fix it.

It's what happened in the U-2. Do you know this ...? Well, in the late '50s, from 1955 to '60, we had an airplane -- it was called the U-2 -- which could fly very high, up above 70,000 feet or 80,000 feet, and photograph the Soviet Union. And it was the way we kept track of missiles, and so on. And it became clear that the Soviets had developed anti-aircraft that could shoot it down, because the old anti-aircraft was

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effective only up to 60,000 feet. So they developed one which went up 100,000 feet, or something.

So the logic was: if they have a gun, they'll shoot it down. And the government said, "They haven't shot it down yet! So we'll keep flying them." And the Soviets did shoot one down in Georgia -- it was not far from Iran. And they captured the pilot. They found it was a spy-airplane taking photographs. And Eisenhower, who was president, denied that it was taking place. And then Krushchev held up a piece of the airplane, and the pilot confessed, and it was terribly embarrassing.

But we've gone on from that. Now we have satellites, on both sides, saying that this is all right, and that it's a good thing rather than a bad thing. But it's the fallacy of: if it works, don't change it, even if the evidence is that it's going to fall down.

The disappointment for me was that we didn't put enough value in our own beliefs to stand by them. We're anti-Communist, and that's .... Why can't we be for democrats, for democracy? We believe in our own system. Particularly in a country that wanted to go that way. And gently. It wasn't a case of radical change -- it was very gradual. That was all that was

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required in Iran, I thought. It wasn't revolution. Although I was of the view that Iran was in a revolutionary state.

Q. You were?

A. Yes. In the sense that it had started in 1890 with the tobacco ... the tobacco revolution, and that it was a country trying to find its own equilibrium. And that all of these explosions along the way were -- there was coup/counter-coup, coup/counter-coup -- but there was one constant, and it had to do with constitutionalism. Even now, with Khomeini, he has a constitution. He can't escape that.

And that what constitutionalism implies is the same thing as fundamentalism, namely equity. Fundamentalism is a non-institutional way of expressing it. It's primitive. It's saying, "We want a fair deal. We want justice. We want respect for family. We want dignity." And it's unformed. Constitutionalism is the next stage, where it's formed. And the tragedy is that fundamentalism sweeps away, or tends to, complexities. And the complexity that Iran had formed for itself was constitutionalism.

So it's not quite swept away. And it's not necessarily inconsistent. Although religious fundamentalism can be.

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Clericalism. Which I think is very temporary and alien to the Iranian ... society, really. I don't see how puritanical clericalism can persist. It's just not in the nature of Iranians, I don't think. Even for mullahs. Do you?

Q. No. You know Hafez says: "Mullahs appear one way and begin another."

A. Well, that's all human beings.

Q. Thank you very much.





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PLAN ORGANIZATION

REVOLUTION OF 1979

SHAH & ARMS PURCHASES

SHAH, CONSTITUTIONALISM, DEMOCRACY & THE

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NARRATOR: WILLIAM MILLER, WILLIAM  
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UNITED STATES, ROLE OF IN IRAN'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

WILLES, EDWARD T.

WARREN, EARL

----- 04 -----  
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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: William G. Miller

Date: March 25, 1985

Place: Medford, MA

Interviewer: Shahla Haeri

Tape no: 4

Q. Mister Miller, let me begin by asking you about the previous ambassadors in Iran. In the order of their assignment, who were the ambassadors under which you served in Iran?

A. Well, I served very briefly under Wailes, and then during Julius Holmes' tenure. I knew several of the succeeding ambassadors, but I didn't serve under them in Iran. So the ... very briefly under Wailes, and Holmes.

Q. Could you tell me the length of the tenure?

A. Well, Wailes was only there for a few months. At the end of 1959. And with the Kennedy administration, Holmes came to

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Iran as the ambassador. And he was there through '64.

Q. Is it Julian Holmes?

A. Julius C. Holmes.

Q. Please describe the background and particular characteristics of each of them.

A. Well, I didn't know Wailes very well. Mainly because he was ambassador in Tehran while I was in Esfahan. And so the geographical distance was a reason for not knowing him well. But I know him by reputation. He had a long familiarity with the area, and was thought to be ... sympathetic to the countries and peoples in the area. He was a career foreign-service officer, diplomat. But during the time that he was there, he had a relatively low profile, and was not regarded, it seems to me, as one of the dynamic ambassadors that the United States has had -- to Iran.

Holmes, on the other hand, was one of the very top American diplomats, with a long and distinguished career. He had wanted to come to Iran at an earlier time, but had been prevented because of politics in Washington. He was a person who was highly intelligent, very skillful in the bureaucratic

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ways of the American government, and someone who was in charge of his embassy. He knew all the various elements that were involved, and wanted to be in charge.

He was a general in the Second World War, serving with Murphy, who was one of the key aides to Eisenhower. And he was involved in the landing in North Africa by submarine, and was a very dashing kind of person.

I knew him quite well because his son was a close friend of mine. We entered the foreign service together, and we've been friends ever since. His son's now an ambassador in Portugal.

He wanted to come to Iran because he thought Iran was important. It was not simply a random assignment. And he was sent there because Kennedy and Secretary of State Ruak thought that he would do a good job, and had the stature to be able to relate to the Shah. That was seen as one of his qualities.

He ran what might be described as a very tight ship as an embassy. He knew everything that was going on. He insisted that he know. He made it clear that the primary relationship with the Shah would be through him, and not through others,

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the military or other people, as had been the case in the past. And he encouraged as full an activity by the embassy as possible, meaning that he wanted to be aware of the full range of Iranian opinion, because he felt that was important.

And while his own relationships were very close to the regime itself, he encouraged contacts -- not only contacts, but deep knowledge of every sector of Iranian society. So he was an ideal ambassador from my point of view. He really wanted to know the nature of the country itself, without being manipulative. I think he was the right kind of ambassador.

He was very good with the officers in the embassy, because he encouraged them to do their best. And he was very secure in his own personality, so that he would encourage bright people to do their work. He was never intimidated by anyone, either in Iran or in Washington, so he did it as he saw the situation. So I think he was a good ambassador, a very good one.

Q. Why, and in what sense, was Iran important from his point of view?

A. Well, I think it was the classic western and American



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view of Iran, that he thought that Iran had great strategic importance. He was very sensitive to the importance of Iranian oil. He was very sensitive to its geographical location near the Soviet Union. He understood the Persian Gulf interest for the west. But, more important than that, I think he saw Iran as a great nation, that should be allied to the west.

He was very interested in its culture. He and his wife were great admirers of Persian art, and they collected a lot, as a matter of fact. And were keenly interested in archaeology and monuments, and so on, and travelled a great deal to do that. No, I think they saw Iran as a major nation of the world that should be allied with the west -- that it was in our interests, from every point of view. And I think he liked Iranians. He had many Iranian friends, in the circles that he naturally had to work in.

I think he reflected Washington, too. Washington believed, as he did, that Iran was vital, because of its oil and geographic location, its population, and historical importance. So that he reflected Washington's view of Iran's importance.

Q. In what way, if any, did the US role in Iran change

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during the tenure of the ambassadors you served?

A. Well, what changed very crucially, I think, during that period was the strength of the Shah's regime. When I first came, in 1959, it was clear that there was a great deal of uncertainty in his own confidence about being a Shah. And by the mid-60s, particularly after the Amini episode, and also the exile of Khomeini, and the beginnings of land reform, that his sense of what a Shah should do changed. He became less tentative and far more assertive in the direction of absolute rule. In that way it changed

The US position towards Iran didn't change strategically; the attitude towards the Shah did. Or the belief from uncertainty to certainty reflected his own change of thinking. That might be one way of putting it. That when he felt confident, the American position reflected that confidence. When he was uncertain, it reflected his uncertainty. So the identification of United States policy towards Iran with the moods of the Shah is an interesting parallel.

On the other hand, the sense of other forces at work in Iran -- other aspects of the Iranian polity -- I think grew less sensitive. As the confidence in the Shah grew, the

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sensitivity to the nuances of Iranian politics grew more obtuse. Which is a curious irony.

The relationships between the ambassadors and the Shah were very intimate, in the sense that there were regular meetings, quite frequent -- and this was at the request of the Shah -- in which they would confer about the state of the world and the state of Iran, and so on and so forth. This was the occasion to give advice, opinions, and views, as well as to petition for ... or to conduct business between the two nations.

But the Shah did this with any number of people, as you know, the British ambassador, and other individuals who he turned to for advice. He was always open, at least in the time that I observed it, to visiting journalists, wise men, or experienced men of various kinds, whether it was from the great banks, or journalism .... The people who would come to Iran, the leaders of the world, for tourism or publicity.

Q. How often would the US ambassador have an audience with the Shah? And what were the usual items on the agenda?

A. Well, we've just covered that. But, as has been indicated in any number of other places -- Helms speaks of it

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in his book, and I think Sullivan talks about it in his book -- the ... and I'm sure the records of the Ministry of Court would show the exact numbers. But it was quite frequent -- at least every few weeks. And certainly no less than every month.

But the nature of the meetings were so much business between Iran and the United States that they would conduct a lot of the formalities, because the government of Iran at that time was so highly centralized in the Shah himself, there was no other way to get decisions, or to conduct business, except through the Shah, because that was the way the Shah ran the country.

So that was the primary thing. And the degree of friendship or intimacy that might grow up between the ambassadors really depended on the personalities. And probably the age and the politics of the individual ambassador, or what have you. And the politics of the administration.

I think the Kennedy administration was looked on somewhat suspiciously by the Shah and the Court, at least initially, because of ... the attitudes of Kennedy himself, and people like his brother, Bobby Kennedy, who had come to Iran at an earlier stage with Justice Douglas. And they were known to

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have sympathized with the student opposition to autocratic rule.

And the Kennedy White House had people who were very interested in the phenomenon of rising elites -- "The New Men" I think was the term they used at that point. And their natural interest was in people from Iran who they had gone to universities with. And it was that identification, perhaps the first time in Iran in that number, where there were many students who went to the United States, who were coming into positions of influence in Iran, particularly in the Plan Organization, and in the economic sphere, and, to some extent, the military, the rising officers who had been trained in the United States.

They, in the United States, identified with those younger people who were their classmates, and they knew and shared discussions with, and so on. So they were people like ... well, all of the Ebtahaj group certainly, some of whom became ministers, and in one case, prime minister -- for a short period.

So I think there was an unease. But Holmes himself, being an older man -- he was in his late 60s -- and conservative in his own views, and a military man, softened some of the

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suspicion of the Kennedy administration. And I think his own views were ... somewhat different than the views of the younger people in the Kennedy White House. And the Shah must have understood that.

Q. In these meetings with the Shah, were Iranian domestic politics ever discussed?

A. Certainly, insofar as they affected the United States. And very often Iranian politics did. But certainly the primary focus was on the US-Iranian relationship. The question of political parties or internal political change and growth was of interest insofar as it affected stability. Or whether it was, in some cases, anti-American, where there was xenophobia of some kind. But in that period there was not much of that.

I think at the level of the ambassador, certainly, the exchanges were relatively formal, and on matters that were of direct concern between the two countries. But there was a lot of business between the two countries. In every aspect of Iranian life.

Q. Which of the US officials would have regular audiences with the Shah?



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A. Well, as I recall, there would be the military. And, in some cases, there would be meetings with the intelligence people. And there would be regular meetings, on occasion, with economic assistance people -- it would depend on the time and the subject.

The Shah seemed to ask for meetings with people who were in charge of rather large concerns of his, and he turned to them for reports and advice on the basis of his own interests. That seemed to be the pattern. And he, of course, met regularly with other embassies to sound their views. And he seemed to be rather systematic about that, to get a sense of the views of the west, even some sense of embassies that were not so friendly.

Q. What do you remember about the imprisonment of General Gharani? It was said that he and Dr. Amini were attempting to get US support for a new government. Can you shed some light on this?

A. This took place in '59? Yes. This took place before I arrived. And I ... only learned of some of the details of it later, and largely from Iranians. And I'm very hazy on the details now. But if I recall correctly, the real issues had



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to do with the acceptability of those who had Mossadeghist sympathies at that point. And that may have been a test of how the Shah, the Americans, and so on, reacted to that. It was a kind of litmus test.

But because that happened before I arrived, I really don't have any direct knowledge of that. But, as I say, so many of these things that affected the internal Iranian situation, and particularly opposition politics, I'd learn mostly from Iranians. Far more from Iranians than I did from my own colleagues. But that's not surprising.

Q. What about the charge that he and Amini were attempting to get US support for the new government?

A. Well, ... I can't speak to General Gharani because I didn't know him. But Amini I came to know personally to some extent, and also he was such a prominent figure during the time I was there. I think, genuinely, his position was in the direction of the constitutionalists, and that he was not anti-Shah, he was for a better reflection of Iranian political interests in the government. He wanted stability.

He was certainly pro-western in the sense that he saw Iran's security enhanced by that more than with any alignment with

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the Soviets, certainly -- he was anti-Soviet. And I think he could easily have gone in a direction of non-alignment, if that, in his own calculations, would enhance Iran's stability. But at that point, it seems to me, he believed that a pro-western, pro-American alignment was in Iran's interests.

He had been in the United States, and he was very well-known to the world of western officials, and what have you. He was very prominent himself. I think that his position, as I saw directly and as others have told me about it, was trying to urge the Shah and to create political circumstances which would broaden the political base. That his role was always as a coalition-builder.

His approach, of course, depended on his own doreha and the people that he knew, and had done business with politically. So his circle was certainly historically constrained. But he reached out to -- it seemed to me -- the National Front. And urged, at critical points, dialogue, at a minimum, and involvement and participation on other occasions. I think he saw himself as -- particularly later in his life -- as a bridge between the old regime and the new.

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He was a very dynamic character. All of the Towfigh characterizations of him were not only amusing, but there was some truth to them. A dynamism and humor in the man which was very appealing. And very clever.

Yes. I would think he would easily be involved in movements, at any point in that period, with broadening the political base. But certainly not in a violent way. It would always have to be by consensus, by agreement, that it was a sensible thing to do. And he saw the Americans as having a very important role in achieving consensus.

Q. What role, if any, did the US embassy play in the formation of the Melliyoun and Mardom Parties?

A. Again, this happened before I came. But I think the model of the United States political system was certainly in the Shah's mind. And reinforced by Americans themselves. The Americans believed that their system was a good one. And that ... they also conversely believed that many parties was a bad idea -- the French model or the Italian model. And that the American model and the British model -- that is, a party in power and a loyal opposition -- would fit Iran.

And many political scientists, so-called, and many Iranians

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who had studied in the United States, or who had served in the United States as diplomats or businessmen, what have you, were of that view. And so I think there's a basis for those who maintain that the Shah got the idea from the American -- and the British -- experience, I think is fair to say, and was encouraged in it by the Americans.

And there was certainly advice about how Americans set up parties. And how they conducted politics. But that was largely at the level of direct experience by Iranians themselves.

The great problem of the Melliyoun and Mardom parties is that they started with no political base at all. They were just personality, in the first instance, there was no .... But, I suppose, the counter-argument is you have to start somewhere, and since most parties in Iran were .... There was no such thing as a party except possibly the Tudeh. They were personality groups and old patterns of behavior.

The idea of party equalling hezbi <party>, I don't think became a reality, really, until -- well, for a moment, perhaps, in the Mossadeqh period. But not until the Khomeini revolution.

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Q. Please go ahead.

A. That's all on that, on those two parties.

Q. Did the US play any role in the formation of them?

A. I don't think any direct role. There were -- as I recall, there were advisers to the various ministries.... During the time I was there ... certainly ... in the post-war period, once there is foreign assistance, there were advisers in all of the ministries. And they were asked for advice. And I'm sure that in -- I suppose the Ministry of the Interior, that conducted the elections, there were advisers in the Ministry of the Interior who were asked about how polling boxes were set up, and how the election tallies were counted, and how you prevent fraud -- the technicalities of running elections.

The business of nominations and reflecting the public will with anything like primaries or party conventions, of course -- there was no analogy possible at that point. Although I'm sure people, in a pure way or theoretical way, suggested such things. But the great Iranian reaction to the two parties was that they were simply selected by the Shah.

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Q. Was the idea formulated by the Shah himself, or was it suggested to him by the US government?

A. Again, I don't know the answer to that. The best people would be -- Wailes is dead, but -- and Julius Holmes is dead .... No, I -- from all I understand of it, I think it was a result of the Shah's own experience. That ... no doubt he was encouraged by the Americans to hold elections -- Americans like elections, but we believe in them ourselves. And we believe that elections confer legitimacy, and legitimacy was a concern of the Shah's and of all those interested in Iran. And that having elections would help in the process of legitimacy.

But, from all I understand, the Shah saw it as an idea that would do that. And his advisers saw it that way. And the new generation of people who were becoming powerful in the Iranian bureaucracy also felt that way -- and the universities. Not to mention those who were constitutionalists, like the Mossadeghists, certainly were of that view that there should be parties permitted. Of course, they would not, and did not, subscribe to the Mardom/Melliyoun as being anything like the parties they had in mind. Or that ... in fact reflected Iranian will.



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And as you know, the National Front was allowed to participate for a few days. Then when it became clear they would have popular support, they were not allowed to participate.

Q. A short, popular party ....

A. Yes, the short life ....

Although, they were interesting. I was there when those ... that was part of my education, was seeing how quickly Iranian opinion would emerge -- truth would emerge -- if there was any freedom, political freedom, of political organization and expression. There was no logical reason for the National Front to have the appeal and effectiveness that it did when controls were relaxed.

But when they did emerge, and in such a short time, with such intensity, it was clear to me that this was the real way that Iranians behaved politically and this was the direction that they wanted to go, that that was the real strength of political expression. And I think many of my colleagues saw that, too. They came to different conclusions, perhaps, than I did.



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Q. Iranian colleagues, or Americans?

A. I think, well, say, my Iranian friends and my American colleagues, or my friends and colleagues in other embassies, and so on, they would be hard-line or soft-line, as the case may be, but .... But they were aware of the strength of the phenomenon -- put it that way. Their views may be different -- were certainly different in many cases than mine.

I saw it as a good thing. When I saw the emergence of this, I asked the next question, which seems to me perfectly sensible, is: "What do these people stand for? What do they want? What's their background? How'd they behave? What sort of people are they as human beings?" And I found them for the most part, patriots, well-educated, desiring to better the life of their people. They were not autocratic, for the most part. They believed in the democratic process. They were constitutionalists. They believed in the rule of law. I found that attractive. I would like to work with people like that. That was my preference, if I had any. Of course, I had no influence.

Q. The next question is actually a follow-up: what were the respective interests of the US and the Shah in signing the Bilateral Military Treaty?

A. Which treaty are you referring to?

Q. I <unclear> of that, and I'm not quite sure. But maybe any bilateral treaty.

A. Well, the military relationships were, again, based on the belief that Iran was important for strategic reasons, and its geographical location, and its resources, its population, and its influence in the area. And that it was a force -- a potential force -- for stability in the area. And that having a strong military in Iran was a good thing, because it would contribute to those purposes. And so, the agreements that were concluded were really on that basis. And supplying weaponry, and training, and so on, were aimed at creating an effective military.

You'd have to go back to the early pacts in the Eisenhower period, the CENTO notion -- or MEDO at that point -- and there the northern tier was seen as a containment of the Soviet Union. And while the treaty alliance never became a reality because of the collapse of Iraq, and other turbulence, particularly in the Arab world, the idea never was dismissed. The idea of having strong states: Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India ... became a great difficulty for the

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United States, although having a strong India was very important.

All of this was seen as desirable. And Washington tended to see strong military establishments as the primary means of stability. And that was one policy argument -- certainly in the academic world, and also in the policy world of Washington. That military stability or security or strength was not the same thing as political stability.

And I was of the view that, while it was important to have a strong army -- a strong military and effective police and all of this is perfectly sensible for a modern nation -- that ... and needn't be hostile or .... You should have benign purposes. That the most important thing was to develop sound political institutions: justice, and political participation, and a sound economy that benefits the most possible people. That was where the real work needed to be done.

And where Iran seemed to want to go. At least, it's emerging leaders believed that. Although, increasingly, the economic aspect of it became the only approach. Partially because those who were given power and responsibility were economists. And those who were politicians were repressed.

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So the political aspect of it diminished ... increasingly over time, which was a pity -- a tragedy. And I would say was one of the major reasons that Iran got itself into the difficulties that it found itself in.

Q. Was it in any way encouraged in this policy in the move away from a political freedom towards more economic and military relationships -- was it in any way encouraged by the US policy?

A. There were occasions when there was an effort away from the military emphasis. Yes, because in the amounts of money that were being spent, there were increasingly disputes between the United States and Iran about the expenditure of its resources, and that too much money was being spent on unneeded weaponry, rather than devoting it to economic development.

It was the same argument we have in our own government. We have, in my view, too large an expenditure on military weapons. But that's a ... not ... every nation seems to have that argument.

And in the case of Iran, certainly in the period when oil revenues were low, it was compelling that too much money was

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being spent on the military and not enough in the economic sector. But once the oil revenues quadrupled, in the early '70s, it ceased to be a problem -- at least for a time. But even then the expenditures were, in the view of many military planners, way beyond the requirements ....

But one could make arguments within the economic sector itself that there were misallocations of priorities -- that not enough was spent on urban development -- not enough was spent on rural development. Having gone into the land reform, much more effort had to be made, for political reasons, to be sure that resources could be given to the villagers. And that was a great failing.

The whole Plan Organization was geared, at least initially, towards industrialization ... and large showy projects, rather than long-term education, rural development, dealing with the urban poor, health, communications. Well, communications, in the last 10 years of the Shah's regime, went ... were astounding in its accomplishment. But one would have to say the urban poor problem was a failure. Rural development was a failure. And certainly ... anything that went in the direction of institution-building was far from successful.

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But the military developed a very effective army, navy, air force.

Q. Very effective ...?

A. Yea. By the measurements of the quality of the force itself. It was just ... in the revolution it had no ... it wasn't trained to be a counter-revolutionary army. It was really aimed at fighting possible wars with Iraq or slowing the Soviets down, or ... maintaining the integrity of its borders. That was the usefulness of the army. But I doubt that any army would be effective against a revolution -- a genuine revolution, which that was. At least for a few days.

Q. Very good.

A number of former Iranian officials are accused of being US agents. Did any Iranian official fit this description? Without naming names, what light can you shed on these descriptions?

A. I don't think I should answer the question at all. But ... I suppose the definition of an agent is someone who is in the pay of a foreign power ... and serves the interests of the foreign power. I don't think I should answer the



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question at all. That's .... Except to say this, that the ... interests of Iran, from a purely patriotic Iranian point of view, were sufficient to ... in most cases, to have a close relationship with the United States.

There was certainly every reason for Americans and Iranians to be close, without being spies or agents. There was much that ... the United States had to contribute to Iran's strength and development as a democratic nation. That absolutely had no relationship with the world of spies and traitors.

Education, a normal commercial life, and cultural relationships were more than sufficient. There was every reason to be very closely allied in every respect, from ... even in personal ways. At least, I thought the marriages between Iranians and Americans in many cases were very happy ones -- were culturally very sound. If that's any reflection. And the capacity of intellectuals to understand one another was, I thought, as good as with any other culture.

Q. How did US policy toward Iran change as a result of the election of Kennedy to the presidency?



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A. I think, as I indicated earlier, there was an interest in the White House, by Kennedy himself, and particularly his brother, Bobby Kennedy, in countries where there was clearly unrest -- politically, internally -- by younger generations. And because the Kennedy administration saw itself as a "new generation," and said so in its inaugural address, and believed that they were.

Because they were born in this century -- the first administration born in this century -- that they had a mandate for the future, and were speaking for the new generations of idealism: the Peace Corps and all those manifestations. Arms control, giving hope for peace rather than war and generosity rather than speculation and deprivation.

They identified with the people they knew in the United States, who were studying, and who had grievances about the way politics were conducted in Iran, and wanted a new order of greater participation and democratization.

And I think that's how the White House certainly initially saw ... the Kennedy administration -- which was very short, only three years -- saw it that way. In fact, there were very conscious efforts to make it clear that that's the way

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they saw it, both for practical reasons, and also for reasons of idealism.

The practical reasons were that they believed that, if you didn't respond to the younger generations, you would reap the whirlwind of revolution or repression. They were prophetic, in that sense. And they encouraged people like our Chief Justice, Earl Warren, to come to Iran. He spoke on "The Rule of Law." I remember that very well, because I helped write the speech.

Q. Did he give a lecture <?>?

A. Yes. He spoke to the Iranian Bar Association, and also all the Supreme Court judges of Iran. And he gave a speech on "The Rule of Law." And it was a very interesting occasion.

Q. What were his views?

A. Well, because there were great concerns about the equity of justice in Iran in certain areas, particularly in .... So he spoke, not knowing the situation. He just spoke, as a lawyer, about equity and justice ... as he practiced it, and as it was practiced in the United States. And it seemed to

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strike a chord of response among the lawyers, but also among the politicians. They saw it as a message.

And I think that was the kind of message that the Kennedy administration wanted to convey: that they believed in those things. So this gave heart to some in Iran, who were in those fields. Law was a tough profession in Iran at that time.

Q. Who had invited him?

A. Oh, he came just as a visitor -- he was touring, and he happened to be there, so they said, "He's an important personality, so he should give a speech."

Q. <unclear>

What role, if any, did the US embassy play in the selection of prime ministers and cabinet ministers?

A. I'm sure that the ... all American embassies in the post-war period had views about the quality of prime ministers and cabinets of various governments, and in some cases expressed their views. But I don't think there were any occasions where anyone was selected that way.

Certainly the United States Embassy, and the British Embassy, to some extent, and perhaps some other embassies, had influence. Influence in the sense that some cabinet officers would be easy to work with. That is, they had had experience in economics, or were thought to be very competent in one way or another, or they did work with the World Bank, things of that sort. And there would be expressions of pleasure that someone was being considered. Or less than enthusiasm if others were.

But the charge that some have made that there was manipulation, I don't think was the case, certainly in the time that I was there. There were people that were liked or disliked, but I don't think there were absolute selections. There were occasions where some officials were known to be corrupt in one way or another -- and by the Iranians themselves were described as such, known to be such. I think there were instances where that awareness was made known. But beyond that, I don't think so.

Again, you have to recall that there was a commonality of interests between the Iranian government and the United States government. And with people who opposed the regime, too, there was a commonality of interest in the kinds of

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people they would prefer to have: people who were honest rather than dishonest. Who were for a strong role in world affairs, or not falling into the Soviet orbit, and so on and so forth.

All of the parties, even if they disagreed with one another, would share those, because they would prefer to have one prime minister rather than another, given the constraints: that there could only be one of two or three people. Everybody else was out-of-bounds. That was the context in which people were favoring or not favoring.

But in the time that I was there, I can't think of anything that would meet the charge that someone was put in or taken out. And of course, in the earlier time, as the Kermit Roosevelt book describes, the government in power was not thought to be a good one by the United States. Although I think that was a huge mistake, to be involved in that way. Certainly with that individual.

Q. The Shah had stated that the US Embassy had pressured him into appointing Dr. Amini prime minister. To what extent is this assertion correct?

A. Well, I think, as we talked earlier, Amini was seen by

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Americans -- and, I think, by Iranians -- as a bridge. The American view at that time was that there was instability, there were increasing signs of a desire on the part of emerging political groups and all political groups, the National Front being the most prominent example, a desire to be involved in the political process, and that Amini understood that.

And Amini, to some extent, was someone who was thought to have the qualities able to handle the difficulties of broadening the political base. And the Americans were of that view at that time.

The issue really was: "Reigning, not ruling," as the term of the time, the popular, capsule description of the main issue. And the National Front used that as a slogan: "The Shah must reign, and not rule."



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NARRATOR: MILLER, WILLIAM  
TAPE NO.: 05

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AGRARIAN REFORM

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: William G. Miller

Date: March 25, 1985

Place: Medford, MA

Interviewer: Shahla Haeri

Tape no: 5

Amini was seen by many as ... someone who was not for a republic, who believed in the monarchy, but believed in a constitutional monarchy, and was also seen as a strong person who had a grip on economic matters, and was familiar with the problems of international finance. He had done those things earlier. And also was well-known to the new economists, the young bureaucrats that were in the Plan Organization, and so on. And his connections with those people was thought to be a good thing.

He was well-known in Washington because of his previous experience. And his name was certainly in the public discussions, and in the press and so on. Some of it <was>, no doubt, self-promotive, which was normal. When American

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officials were asked by Washington who would be a good prime minister at this time, he was a name that naturally would come up, because they knew him, and were familiar with his basic views.

There was certainly that kind of pressure. That from the American point of view, someone like that seemed to make sense at that time. And the Shah was told that by the Americans. And I suspect he was told that in Washington, as well.

So the issue really was: did you want a strong prime minister who, in certain areas at least, would have an independent say and capabilities. And it was seen as someone who was competent and who would have some popular support, could reach out to the opposing groups, and would help to broaden the base. And those were the views that were expressed at that time.

Q. If it is at least partially correct, how did the US embassy persuade the Shah to appoint Dr. Amini?

A. I don't think I can shed any light on that. The way I recall it, he was an inevitability because he seemed to fit at the time. There was no other choice, really, that made

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any sense.

And ... it certainly was a moment at which the relatively absolute power of the Shah was seen as curtailed. Because here was a prime minister who had an independent base. It was a very small base -- personality groups -- but he was well-known. It was his personal fame that was his independent base. And his fame extended beyond Iran to the West.

But clearly the Shah was very suspicious and wary of the whole business, and saw Amini as a rival. And the usual process of ... divide and rule seemed to ... certainly was taking place. He never -- Amini never had the total support of the Shah. There were certain areas where he had no influence whatsoever as prime minister. The military, for example -- the budget, the final decision on oil revenues.

And, as we all know, he collapsed ... his regime collapsed on the question of economic priorities.

Q. Was the Shah afraid that the US would support him and would change the regime?

A. I think that was a fear on his part. It was a false

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fear. There was absolutely no intention of any United States policy or any official that I knew of -- that was never in their thinking at all. Never. But people who were very close to the Shah at that time expressed the view that he feared that. But, you know, I suppose people like the Shah, who are in that position, always have fears of that. I'm sure Gorbachev has a fear of Gromyko. It's a human failing.

Q. It has been said that the US was the architect of the Shah's land reform program. A White House aide during the Kennedy administration, Robert Komer, has been specifically mentioned as a key proponent. Can you shed some light on this question?

A. No. I think that's false. Land reform was an Iranian concern from a very early time. After all, Mossadeq had a land reform program of very important significance that's not much understood. His embryonic land reform was a crucial step in the right direction, and was a major platform for the National Front people. They believed in land reform. But it was of a very different kind than the White Revolution's variety.

They were of the view that the land should belong to those who till it, but that there was a right of property that was

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much more in tune, as I understood it -- and I spent a lot of time trying to understand it -- what they were seeking was something that would be consistent with Iranian religious law on the vaghf, inheritance, but also do away with the abuses of landlords who were rapacious and did not really contribute to the villages, who exacted too large shares.

And there was some sense of excess -- some people had far too many villages. But the idea of ownership, of private ownership, was certainly not challenged by Mossadeqh. They were more interested, particularly in the later years -- in fact, at the time that I was there -- in cadastral surveys of how the very differing villages of Iran could, in fact, be divided in some sensible way that wouldn't adversely affect the economy.

They were beginning to consider the problems of agribusiness, consolidation, cooperatives, and all of the very complicated problems. In fact, Ebtetaj and the Plan Organization had a group that were working on cadastral surveys. And many of the people who were in the Plan Organization were National Front members. Their lineage goes back to the idea in the Mossadeqh time. Which seemed to me the most sensible way.

And there were many people who had been coming to Iran from



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the World Bank -- Wolf Ladejinski <?>, who's a very prominent land reform expert, particularly ... well, he was an expert on village patterns, rather than land reform, although he would advocate land reforms in various places.

Well I was convinced when I was there that for Americans to advocate land reform was a very curious thing, because we had no such laws. And who were we to advocate such things? And we didn't know what we were talking about. There were a lot of complexities. The more I saw of the villages, the more I was convinced that the variety was so vast that a uniform pattern would be very difficult to impose -- or desirable.

Clearly the share system was certainly abused in many areas, and the villagers were in bad shape in many others -- subsistence and otherwise ... disease. But that wasn't a consequence that would be resolved by so-called land reform.

There were enthusiasts who saw land reform as a solution in the same way they saw elections as a solution. They saw the principle as the same thing as the result. And I think Komer certainly was interested in land reform as a reflection of democratization. But I don't think he advocated any particular form -- he just wanted movement in that direction.

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I think the Shah was convinced by Arsanjani more than anyone else. And in fact, he was very sensitive to what Mossadegh had done earlier, and he was listening very carefully to the noises being made by the National Front. And he preempted them. The White Revolution was a preemption. Everything in the White Revolution was in the National Front program -- in one form or another. In some cases, severe distortions, but nonetheless, all of the items were in the National Front agenda for what was needed for Iran.

I think the fact that the White Revolution took place was an acute awareness on the part of the Shah that he had to do at least that. It was sort of a minimum program, which he hyped in order to say: "See, I'm a reformer! And there's no need for these other guys because I'm doing it. Why do you need the other ones?" That was essentially the ....

So I would say, no, that the Shah himself was the determining factor. He had historical reasons within Iran to do it. He had lots of advice over many years. He had the experience of his father, who acquired and disposed of villages at a great rate. And he was well-aware of that. And he had ministers of Court and close friends who were huge landowners and knew the problems of village ownership and land reform. There was nothing that Komer could tell the Shah about the village

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problem.

So, no, I think that's totally false. The land reform -- the White Revolution -- was primarily sparked by the National Front platform. If you wanted a direct cause, I would say that was it. It was an attempt at preemption. And it was the personal influence of Arsanjani.

Arsanjani was a charismatic figure on that subject. He had a dynamism which was ... anyone in Iran at that point would see. You know, the people would just come alive. There's a wonderful photograph of a villager receiving land reform ... Do you know that?

Q. From the Shah or from Arsanjani?

A. From the Shah, but it was really from Arsanjani. But Arsanjani was able to capture that kind of ..... It's a wonderful photograph, which I have.....

Q. I remember <unclear>

A. I don't think it has anything to do with the Americans. It was internal. The Americans were saying: "Do it!" Because those were noises Americans were making -- everywhere

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-- they were saying that in India; they were saying that in Pakistan; they were saying it in Africa. It was the shorthand for: "If you have to say something, say that." It was thought to be motherhood. "If you're doing that, you're on the right track." That's the ....

But clearly the Shah did it for his own reasons, based on his own historical experience, and based on the realities of Iranian politics. I don't think it was induced.

Q. But what do you make of the coincidence that the other similar programs in India, Pakistan, and in other places <unclear>?

A. No. It was a phenomenon that was taking place in the world, that's all. The change in .... You know, after all, the nature of life in the twentieth century is different than the nineteenth century, partially due to improved medicine, communications, transistor radios, travel ... No, I'd say communications and medicine were the great catalysts for land reform. Modern agriculture, too. The possibilities of changing the famine and the cycles of great harvests and famines. And the politics really followed from that. One can't deny the influence of other ways of thinking.

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In India, certainly the British had an influence, but what has gone on in India is very Indian. The village structure is still the heart and soul of India. It's unchanged ... by the British except language and superimposed communications. The railroad, I suppose, was very important for India. That made a change. That brought new kinds of medicine, some new thoughts, the beginnings of government in the village. The government was not in the village in India, any more than the government was in the village in Iran. That's a twentieth century phenomenon.

Government was certainly in the cities of Iran. But even there, they were provincial centers of power which were different from the center, up until the twentieth century.

Q What was the view of the US embassy regarding the closing of the Majles by Dr. Amini and the postponing of the elections?

A. Well, it was a sign of instability that there had to be .... The disturbances were really due to a discontent with the rigging of things. And a rigged parliament was not satisfactory. So ... that was the appreciation of the embassy, that that was the basis of the disturbance. And the closing ... shutting down of the parliamentary government was

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a reflection that something else had to be done.

That was what Amini was trying to do, as I recall it,... was that that wasn't working. They had to broaden the base. He would make an attempt at that, in which he did not succeed, obviously. Because he didn't have the power to succeed. If he had had a freer hand, I think he might have. It's possible.

He had a very difficult problem, because neither the Shah nor the National Front trusted him at crucial moments. And the reasons were in part because they didn't think he had the power ... in either case. If they had a sense that he had the power, they might have dealt with it. And they did at one point -- or at several points. Those equations are always so delicate.

Q. Was there an attempt by the US to persuade the Shah to reopen the Majles?

A. Yes, Sure. I think the view of the United States at that point was that the parliament was part of the legitimate structure of Iran; that it was not good for Iran not to have a parliamentary government. It was as simple as that.



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The difficulties of having a parliament that was not reflective of the people <were> understood. But I think the view was that Iran and the Shah had to make the decisions about how to eventually broaden the base, but they had to do something. And that parliamentary government was important to have. But they clearly understood that the parliaments that were selected didn't work.

Q. What was the attitude of the US embassy as National Front activities were being disrupted and their leaders imprisoned?

A. The view of the embassy was that this was not a good thing. That as long as the activities of the National front leaders were legitimate, that is, they were not throwing bombs or practicing sedition of any kind -- which they were not, they were simply trying to organize as parties under the Iranian Constitution -- that they should be permitted to do so. However, it was clearly understood that the Shah didn't like this group for all kinds of reasons that go back to 1953, and before. And that it was a very difficult problem.

They believed that the Shah was the "linchpin of stability" -- was their term. And that they would support the Shah at every turn, but they would try and encourage him to take from the National Front those elements that were clearly ... of no



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harm to him. They didn't see that this group had any ... in individual, and in sum ... really offered any threat to the regime. Although they understood that if they were in power, it would mean reigning, and not ruling.

Most of the people in the embassy and in Washington believed that they should work through the Shah at every stage. That that was the right way to do it. It was legitimate. It was the easiest way. It was the one that had the least risks. They would try to persuade him to gradually broaden the political base. And that was believed all during the time that I was there.

There were some who believed that there should be more effort made. That was my view. But generally the view was: the Shah should move in that direction. Even of the most conservative of the people in the embassy or in Washington.

Q. To what extent was the US embassy aware of the illegal activities of the SAVAK under Teimour Bakhtiar?

A. I think they were aware in detail. Yes, there was ... certainly most Iranians were aware. And the Iranians were very vocal. So there was no reason for anyone in Iran not to know in detail. So, yes, there was full awareness.

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Q. And what was the attitude of the US embassy towards these activities?

A. Well, I think the attitude was that it was harmful to the regime. There were some who went beyond that to say that this was ... that the United States should make its views on these matters clear, because it's contrary to our beliefs of the way governments should be, and so on. I think the major attitude was that this was something that the Shah and his government had to deal with, and correct itself.

There were other views that most of what SAVAK was doing was aimed at the Tudeh and subversion from the Soviet Union, and what have you. And that the excesses of the secret police were ... should be curbed, and could be curbed, but that they were not the main work of SAVAK. They saw the SAVAK's main work as aimed at the Soviet Union and the Tudeh. And because that was the main job, their approaches to the Shah were complicated rather than straightforward and simple. You know, denouncing the .... But they did, in fact, object to the worst of the excesses.

Q. To what extent was an effort made by the US embassy to curtail these activities?

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A. I think there were considerable efforts, yes.

Q. Could you describe some of them?

A. Well, I think the ambassador made representations. Of course, the United States press was very explicit in these things. And individual members of the embassy were very clear on this. And I think that the liaison with the Iranian government in these areas were very clear about the ... that these excesses were harmful. But there are other people you could ask, who were more directly involved in those matters.

Q. What, if any, was the connection between the Shah's visit to Washington and meetings with President Kennedy, in April of 1962, and the fall of Amini's cabinet in July of 1962?

A. Well, I think there was a relationship. The Shah expressed his views about things, and the Kennedys saw what his concerns were. If the question is intended to mean: was a decision made at that time about Amini? I would say no. No. The decision was made on the question of extending the loan, which was the crux -- at the time. So it was in the days just before the Amini government fell.

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I think, as I told you the last time we talked, that the full consequences of extending a further loan to the Amini government (debt servicing -- that's what it was) was not fully understood. The World Bank was pressuring for certain constraints. And Amini was unwilling to meet those, because he politically couldn't. And it also meant a change in his priorities, which were the test between him and the Shah. If he backed down on those priorities, he would lose face, he'd lose power, and so on. That wasn't understood by the bank fully. It wasn't understood by the economists in Washington.

On the very primitive level, I think it was understood that it was a contest of will between the Shah and Amini. But Washington tended to see the context of the struggle of will between the Shah and Amini from the Shah's point of view. Namely, that it's me or him. Rather than, the issue is: should you have a strong prime minister, who would have independence in certain areas, and whose purpose is to broaden the political base? The issues in Washington were never posed with that complexity. They were: are you with the Shah or against him?

That was never the question. The question is: the Shah and what? So they reduced the question to a false simplicity. And that was the turning point.

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But at the time of the Shah's visit in Washington, no decision. The issue wasn't really ripe at that time, either. The turning point hadn't been reached. Although the frictions were clear between the two.

A. Where were we?

Q. We were talking about Amini and the decision ... regarding his removal.

A. Yes. Well, I really have nothing much more to add than that.

The decision was made on the loan. In sum, on two grounds. One was the ... from the point of view of the economists at the World bank, who were worried about debt repayment. And international obligations. And "Iran has to tighten its belt." And all of that. Without understanding the political implications.

And the United States government saw the struggle between Amini in oversimplified terms. They saw antagonists where in fact ... an opposition ... in terms that were totally false. The real issues were much more subtle and important. It was

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a missed opportunity of rather sizable proportions.

Q. Was the US embassy consulted by Dr. Amini or the Shah before the acceptance of his resignation?

A. Yes. Both.

Q. Before the acceptance of his resignation?

A. Oh, yes. Well, as was the pattern in that time, there were constant discussions between all of the parties, at every level, within the Shah's group ... immediate ... his ministers and the Shah himself; and Amini and all of his friends.

Q. How did Amini react to that?

A. Well, I think he was bitterly disappointed in the event. I think his greatest disappointment was the failure of the Americans to understand the importance -- beyond him, it was much more than Ali Amini. Amini's disappointment must have extended to some Iranian groups as well, because the National Front didn't make things easier for him. In all cases.

There were some who certainly understood the dilemma, and

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they saw the advisability of this. And I think they looked at Amini as basically a benign force, but certainly not an end in itself. They wanted to go way beyond Amini, obviously. And Amini understood that. So did the Shah.

Q. Did General Bakhtiar meet with President Kennedy and try to get US support for himself as prime minister?

A. I don't know. I can't believe that he did. I would doubt it. I would doubt it. President Kennedy might have been -- would certainly have been aware of who he was. But I doubt that he would support such a thing .... But I just don't know the answer to that. I would be very surprised if he was sympathetic to that kind of suggestion.

Q. How did the US embassy view and assess the events of the 15th of Khordad, June 1963?

A. Well. The embassy was as surprised as anyone else. But it knew quite fully what happened. And did analyses at the time, which were sent to Washington, which are in the published volumes from Tehran. So the basic appreciation was that here was a force, a mass uprising of a kind that had not been seen before. That these things came from the new urban poor, and the villagers and the deeply religious. And that



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they were very powerful. And that they had nothing to do with the existing political structure.

The grievances were described at the time very accurately, just as they were understood by Iranians who were affected by all of these things. And I think it was viewed as ... After the awareness that here was a powerful force, when Khomeini was exiled, and the religious uprisings were crushed, and the situation became stabilized, people forgot about it. And went into ... as though it had never happened. They just forgot.

But at the time, it was recognized, it was described accurately, I think. Well, anyone in Tehran at that time would have had to be deaf, dumb and blind not to have understood what was happening.

Q. It is also said that Ali Mansour had close relations with the embassy, and that he too was forced upon the Shah as prime minister by the Americans. To what extent, if any, is this assertion correct?

A. He had close relationships with officials in the United States embassy, but that was not unusual. I mean, they were no different than most of the prominent Iranians in Tehran.

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They all had relations with the ... they visited, went to dinners. They sought the invitations, in many cases. They were sought after in others. But it was normal business.

Mansour was not imposed or suggested by the embassy, nor was his Progressive Center. I think that was an idea of the Court itself. And certainly of Mansour, himself. But I think it was another variant on the Shah's own ideas of trying to develop some kind of indigenous political structure. And this ... after the failure of the two-party system, he went in the direction of a government party, Progressive Center, with an opposition -- sort of hanging on to the old structure. And then finally he ended up with the Rastakhiz, a one-party structure.

But, again, these would be ... from the new elite, rather than in the old, which was a reflection of the .... The Mardom and Melliyoun had one virtue, which was ... even though they were all selected by the Shah, they did reflect, in their variety, the regions of Iran, the bazasri -- they had all kinds of people in the slates. Although they were all "Shah prest" <Shah-worshippers>. And there were no people of any independence.

But in the Progressive Center, they were the new bureaucrats,

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primarily. And the new industrialists. That was the ... the new rich, and the new governing. And they tended to be focussed in Tehran. They were very Tehran-oriented, although there were offshoots in the centers.

No. I think this was the Shah's idea. It was a Court idea. They were people who naturally had a lot of contacts with America and the west. People like Mohsen Khadjenouri and, I guess, all of the brothers -- oh, goodness, the prime minister who was killed ... Why do I forget? You know, the one who was executed?

Q. Hoveida.

A. Hoveida. The two Hoveidas. And, you know, it was a group. In fact, they tended to be French-educated, in many cases, rather than American or British-educated. For the most part, they were very decent, capable people, who were very moderate, even conservative, in their views. Very successful, for the most part. And had every reason to, and had an investment in the continuation of the regime. But were the most moderate of the reformers.

Q. If it is correct, which I guess it is not, why did the Americans wish to see Mansour appointed as prime minister?

A. I don't think, as I said, I don't think it was. There were people in the embassy who were very close to Mansour -- they were friends. They would see each other continuously because of their equivalent rank. But it was a mistake to equate that with an intense preference on the part of the United States of America. It may have been the personal preference of an individual. But that's not the same thing.

And the Shah clearly understood that Mansour was a friend of people in the American embassy, and that would be a plus. But there was no way on God's earth that Mansour would have been appointed prime minister unless the Shah thought that he would serve his purposes. His purposes rather than the American purposes.

Q. In what way, and at what point in time between 1959 and 1979, could the US government have influenced the Shah to a greater respect for constitutional government?

A. Oh, I think at every stage of the way we could have done that. I think it should have been the foundation of our policy towards Iran. That that should have been the predominant theme of how ambassadors should discuss how they saw the future of Iran. It's how every administration -- our

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administrations -- should have done that. And that all of our official acts should have been designed to achieve that end.

But what in fact happened was that, as the Shah became more confident, and after the White Revolution and the exile of Khomeini and the suppression of even the National Front, that American policy and American ambassadors tended to see the Shah as in power and doing a good job of it, and he should be left to his own devices. It was his country and it was very complicated and beyond the right or capacity of Americans to interfere in any way. That he should have a free hand, and that in the long run it would become a democracy. But that the economic priority was so successful that that was the way to go.

And I think the awareness of what was happening internally in Iran was less sensitive in that period, unfortunately. There was no sense of the emerging ... priority, particularly since the economic development of Iran was going so well in so many respects. And the logic of events in the post-war period would have argued for special care in political development, given what had happened elsewhere in the world. Even if you knew nothing about the details of Iranian history, or the state of Iranian society, you would be able to make a

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geo-political judgment based on those patterns.

The great mistake, it seems to me, was to not pay close attention to Iran, even though Iran was one of our closest allies, and was seen as a great source of stability and strength. And to have ignored the protests of the students in the United States, and the intellectuals, was a remarkable mistake, because they were articulating, in very important ways, the problem.

But it reveals the difficulty of dealing on a personal basis rather than institutional basis, and not using the instruments of analysis, of systematic study -- not using the things of the mind -- to tell you what's happening. It's just a tragedy for the United States -- and for Iran.

A question that arises, though, is: if the United States had seen this as a priority, would it have made any difference in the eventual outcome? Would the Khomeini revolution occur?

And I'm of the view that I think it would have made a difference. Certainly, had there been a broader political base, the religious concerns would have been, in large measure, met. There was nothing incompatible with constitutional government and religious belief. In fact,



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it's guaranteed in the constitution. And if you allow the religious people to have a say in the things that matter to them, you have done what you should do as a government. And that certainly is part of the grievance that the religious had.

And had the other institutions and groups in Iran been allowed to flourish, there would have been an alternative to clerical rule. And it would have been the logical alternative, because they're the people who are trained by profession to do that -- clerics are not.

So I think it would have made a difference. And there were periods when America was involved in Iran, where they were moving in that direction, but it was never sustained. I suppose the ultimate question is whether it's possible for a country, even for the United States, to have a foreign policy which is consistent with its own beliefs about government for itself. If we really believed in the democratic ideal, shouldn't this apply overseas? This is a major question for our foreign policy. And Iran is a terribly costly lesson about all the ramifications of that.

Q. Various individuals have spoken about an abortive trip by you to meet the Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris. What was the



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background to this trip and why was it cancelled?

A. Well, the trip wasn't cancelled. The background is as follows. When the embassy was seized by the student group, and the 52 -- or the eventually 52 -- were made hostages, contact was made immediately with the Bazargan government, which was still in power. And it was agreed that I would go out, with Ramsey Clark, to Tehran, to meet with Bazargan, and with the Ayatollah, to discuss problems between the United States and Iran, and the release of the hostages.

Now, approval for the trip had been granted, so we left from Washington two days after the seizure of the embassy, and were flying in the President's airplane to Tehran. And it stopped in Istanbul for refueling, when we received word from Washington that Tehran had said it would not be possible to go into Iran in the Boeing-707. And we said that was all right, and we arranged for a small military jet -- passenger jet -- to go from Istanbul to Tehran. And clearance was given for that.

Just at that point, the Bazargan government fell. And the reason it fell was, apparently, the student captors had broken open the safes, and begun to piece together the documents. And, in their view, this confirmed that, to use

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their terms, the embassy was "a nest of spies." And they had gone to Qom, and told the Ayatollah ... he had said that there would be no relations with the United States.

So -- not only that -- but the Bazargan government fell because, among other things, there were a number of officials who were in the Bazargan government who were implicated, because it was claimed that they were American agents. Whereas, I think, in fact they were simply people who had been visited on official business by the charge, Bruce Laingen, and others. But, at any rate, the Bazargan government fell, and the Revolutionary Council took over.

And so there was no official government in power. There was no prime minister. Khomeini had cut off any contact, officially. So the problem for the United States government, for us, was who could we talk to in order to go to Iran. If we went to Iran, where would we go? Who would we talk to? And so, in Istanbul, with the cooperation of the Turkish government -- and every government in the world -- we communicated with the Revolutionary Council directly, by telephone.

Q. I'm sorry, who was the Revolutionary Council? Or there was a group of people?

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A. Yes. Beheshti, and ....

Q. A particular person, I meant,...

A. No. All of them. Or all that we ... No one was in charge. There was a membership of the Revolutionary Council.

And we also made contacts with other people in Iran who were close to the Ayatollah. We were bearing a letter from the President of the United States to the Ayatollah. And this was known.

But it became quickly clear that it was not possible to deal with any person or group that meant anything. Because there was a struggle for power under way in Iran itself. So we talked to a number of the people in the Revolutionary Council, a number of people close to Khomeini...

Q. Via telephone?

A. Via telephone. And also by intermediaries -- other governments, and what have you.

The situation became more and more uncertain politically --

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internally. Although it was possible to communicate by telephone, either directly or indirectly. Part of the diplomacy that we were able to engage in from Istanbul -- with Washington and other capitals -- resulted in the release of the first group: the Blacks and the women. And so that was the best we were able to do. We were in Istanbul for several weeks, and it was then....

After several weeks, it was clear that, until the Iranian government had stabilized itself, there was going to be no means. But we were prevented from going in. I mentioned to you that we had a military jet ready, and that we said we were coming. And then they said, "No, you have to come by private plane, through ...." We had just boarded a Turkish airliner. And they said that no official Americans could come to ... so we stopped. And we had to conduct all our negotiations by intermediaries or by telephone at that point.

That was an interesting chapter.

Q. <unclear>

A. Well. Yes. It's hard to know what would have happened had we gone to Iran.

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Q. Could you talk directly to someone like Beheshti?

A. Yes. We did.

Q. And what was his reaction?

A. He was sympathetic. "We'll do what we can. We have to ...." All of them were sympathetic in tone, and no one was rude or hostile at all. No, we talked with a large number of the Revolutionary Council. It was an extraordinary experience.

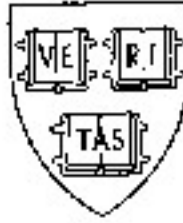
Q. But who decided that you couldn't go to Iran? Was it Khomeini himself?

A. Not clear. It must have been a decision by Khomeini ultimately, but I think the .... It was clear that the Revolutionary Council was divided. There was a group that said, "We should try and have good relations with the United States." The other group was saying just the opposite because they feared intervention, on the one hand. On the other, they could use the United States as a means of solidifying support. And that kind of internal politics seemed to be what was happening at that time.

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But, despite all of the efforts in the world community -- everyone was involved in this: the UN, and the Vatican, and the Arab States, and the Soviet Union -- they were all assisting, you know.

The reason, probably, that I was chosen is that I had been asked to go to Iran as ambassador prior to that. And I had declined (although evidently I'd been thought by the Bazargan government to be acceptable) on the grounds that I didn't think I could be of much use, really. Although I was thinking very seriously of changing my mind, and going.



# HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES  
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEWER: SHAHLA HAERI

TAPE No.: 6

RESTRICTIONS: NO QUOTATION WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THE NARRATOR



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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
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IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: William G. Miller

Date: March 25, 1985

Place: Medford, MA

Interviewer: Shahla Haeri

Tape no: 6

Before you go on ... why ...this particular spectrum of people...?

Q. I will read the names of those historical figures which you have personally known. Please describe one or two situations in which they were involved and you personally observed, in order to provide a more complete sketch of these individuals as men and political figures.

The first person is Mohammad-Reza Shah.

A. Yes. Well, I saw the Shah on quite a few occasions. Most of them were official. First in Esfahan, where I was

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assigned as vice-consul. At the time I was there, which was 1959 and '60, the Shah came to Iran <Esfahan> on several occasions to be the host for royal visitors. And the occasions were the visit of Queen Elizabeth and Philip, the visit of the Prince and Princess of Japan, and King Hussein of Jordan.

On each of those occasions, the Shah went through a visit of the major monuments of Esfahan: the mosques and bridges and maidan <square>, <the> bazaar. And there were receptions at the airport and Chehel Sotoun <"Forty Columns" -- a Safavid building> for the guests and the notables of Esfahan, and the very small diplomatic community. So, over a period of a few months, we saw quite a bit of the Shah.

And it was an interesting introduction to the Imperial Court, because the Shah had his major officials with him. And of course his entourage was quite large, and very elaborate. And Esfahan was decked out in great splendor, with the carpets along the way that the visitors would go, and there were arches of flowers and some very fantastic arrangements.

And on one occasion, when the Queen of England came, the entire route of the royal group was painted blue, because it was said that the Queen liked blue. So you had the drama of

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Esfahan's mud-colored walls being blue in a certain path. That was the occasion when the Chehel Sotoun had a modern bathroom installed temporarily, much to everyone's relief -- in case the Queen needed to take a bath. <unclear>

But they were very wonderful -- wonderful in the sense of elaborate ... full of ceremony and splendor, so they were very interesting. There were brief discussions of a formal nature. But after the third time, the Shah recognized that he had seen us before.

Those were the first meetings with the Shah. Then when I went to Tehran as ambassador's aide, I saw the Shah on a number of occasions when the ambassador went to see the Shah at Court. And I was the assistant, and carried the formal papers, the treaties and what have you, that were to be discussed. And so we went to Sadabad, and also ... we had one session downtown, at the palace downtown.

And there were several salaams <public audiences> at Nowruz, when we met with the Shah. And we met the entire diplomatic corps and the high officials of the Iranian government -- that was in the Gollistan Palace. And that was an interesting, elaborate ceremony, where the ambassador would read a formal statement of congratulations. And the Shah

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would answer. Then he would be introduced to the diplomats in order of rank, and have words to say. That was a very elaborate, formal occasion.

I saw the Shah on a number of other occasions. Once, skiing -- in fact, twice skiing. There was a new ski lift that was near Ab Ali -- it was called the Nour Club. And he was skiing there, and I was skiing -- with his bodyguards.

So the occasions that I had ... I saw him in conversations with the ambassador, I saw him on formal occasions, and, somewhat, at play. And on one occasion I saw him in Washington, on one of his visits. But I cannot in any sense say that I have any intimate insights in ... the formalities. On those occasions he seemed up to the job of protocol and being a host for his nation's visitors on those matters.

I can recall the way the Court was arranged, and the behavior of the entourage, and the nature of the royal palaces, including Sadabad, and some sense of preferences in furniture, and taste, and costume, and the manner of speaking. But I can't claim any insight into the intricacies of his mind or any strengths or weaknesses of character.

Q. What kind of man did he appear to you to be -- on a

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broad, superficial level? First-hand observations and impressions that <unclear>

A. Well, he seemed like other men. There was nothing fearful or extravagant or peculiar, given the position of being the king. No, he seemed relatively at ease, and attractive, and ... interested .... There was nothing in the formal aide of him that would give any indication of the quality of the man. The formal role was one that didn't indicate any distinctions of any kind, either eccentric or otherwise. He seemed attractive, and interested, alert, intelligent. But beyond that, there was nothing that you could really see.

He obviously liked the visit of the Queen and Prince Philip, and Hussein, and the Princess .... Oh yes, there was another occasion in Esfahan when the Comte de Paris came ....

No. I'd say that I got a sense of what the Court was like <unclear> -- the context of the king in Iran. But it would take far more personal relationships to begin to have any judgment about his character. I have lots of views about what he did as a Shah, but those are analytical rather than emotional.

Q. Ashraf. Princess Ashraf.

A. Again, they were formal occasions. Ashraf and Shams were always talked about in Esfahan. Esfahan was a very interesting place, because the rulers were judged by what they did for Esfahan. And Shams was preferred because she did things for Esfahan, it was thought, in the way of Red Lion and Sun -- good works of one kind or another. She caused a building to be put up, and they planted some trees, so therefore she was thought to be good. Ashraf was not thought, in the same way, because she didn't favor Esfahan. In the minds of the Esfahanis.

I saw her on a number of occasions -- again, they were formal, and as I saw other members of the Shah's family. There were lots of reports and stories about her Court. She was the most prominent of the royal family as far as having "dorehs" and active social life, which would bring some of the major politicians and intellectual figures, of a certain kind, to be involved. But beyond that, no.... Some of her family, her sons, I knew somewhat. We played tennis together -- things like that -- in Tehran.

Again, it was so occasional as to have no real insights into character, intellect or real beliefs.



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Q. Hossein Ala.

A. I saw him on quite a few occasions with Ambassador Holms, who ... visited him quite often. I was very impressed with him. I thought he was a man of great wisdom and judgment, and thoughtfulness. And his own style of life -- his home was such a beautiful place that reflected so much of the beauty of Iran: lovely library and the sense of peace and reflection and beauty. And his own character seemed to be that way.

He was already very old, but he seemed to have a balance and gentleness that was a great asset, it seemed to me. I would think, if there were more people like him, it would have been a very good influence on the Shah.

Q. Him?

A. Hossein Ala. If there were more like him ... But beyond that .... Again, his children I knew, because they were closer to my age.

Q. Teimour Bakhtiar.

A. Again, the initial connection is Esfahan, because my first landlord -- an apartment I rented -- was a relative of his, a Bakhtiar named Yahyah -- Yahyah Khan Bakhtiar. A cousin -- close cousin. And Taimour was well-known in Esfahan, for all kinds of reasons. All the Bakhtiar are known in Esfahan, because it's the closest major city to their lands.

He had other relatives, from the Samsams, Samsam Bakhtiar, that were very much in opposition to him. In fact, Samsam had connections with the -- as did Chapour -- with the National Front, and were in the constitutional line, were proud of themselves as in the constitutional line -- the Bakhtiar who supported the constitution.

So there was this tension .... I saw General Bakhtiar on occasions in Bakhtiar country, when I was visiting some Khans on a hunting trip, and he was hunting. He seemed to enjoy that from time to time. I never had any official talks with him beyond formalities, although I was well aware of his activities and the organization that he headed. I mean, his reputation was one of being a very hard, tough, chief of the secret police. And greatly feared.

Q. Dr. Manouchehr Eghbal.

A. Again, this was .... He was in and out of the very top of the Iranian government. And when I went with the ambassador, I would see him on a number of occasions. His reputation among the Iranians, as you know, was being the slave of the Shah. He seemed totally an old-style courtier: that whatever the Shah wished was his command. And a man of no ... by personal decision, who had no other view, except to serve the Shah as the Shah wished. And he did that to the best of his ability.

He was an interesting type for me, because in the United States there are always some assertions of individual will, and in the case of Dr. Eghbal, there seemed to be the phenomenon of being a loyal servant to the king was exemplified, it seemed to me, in Eghbal. And I don't think that's a bad thing, if that's the way you see the world.

My position -- in almost all of these cases -- was to observe. I never really had to deal with them as equals. I was far from that. So it's an unfair position to make judgments about them because you have no immediate sense of the responsibilities that someone may have -- or the burdens, or the terrors.

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Q. Ja'far Sharif-Emami.

A. Again, the same kind of circumstance. Emami struck me as someone who was very adroit and skillful. Who was a very flexible, almost troubleshooter for the Shah, who would be called in when things were totally out of hand. And he would do his best to dampen already disastrous situations -- that seemed to be his role. Eghbal would be called in the first instance, then Sharif-Emami would be called.

So they were .... He was much more flexible a figure, I think, than Eghbal. Although really in the same school of politics. And the same notion of the role of the Shah and their role in relation to him.

Q. Dr. Ali Amini.

A. Well, that's .... One of the most interesting people I met in Iran was Dr. Amini. He is such a vital human being. His personality is so full of life and so amusing and bubbly that you couldn't fail but like him because he was so ... always darting all over the place and cracking jokes and setting people at ease. And always telling fascinating stories of one kind or another -- he was a master of conversation and engagement.

He was a passionate politician. He delighted in the activity of politics and liked to have groups around him, liked to be involved. I think he was a very interesting transitional figure, in many ways. Coming from another dynasty, with a lot of experience of the West, but still a man of the Court, in many ways. Very sensitive to the West. He was a major figure in Iran, with a lot of influence and certainly was there at the most crucial times.

I think if he had been given more scope, more support, at crucial moments, the history of Iran might have been very different than it is now. He was a man whose motives, I think, were basically patriotic, sophisticated, and would have served Iran well if they had been given more play than they were given.

He certainly, among the Iranians of that period, probably has the largest insight into all the ramifications of what was going on within the Court, outside the Court, and the nature of opposition politics, the behavior of the Americans, the British, of the Russians. He probably has the most comprehensive view of the political world of any Iranian, I would think.

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I know you've interviewed him in depth. His memoir, I'm sure, is the most significant -- or should be.

But he had the best contacts with the younger generations, too. He was interested in them. He sought them out. He wanted to hear what they had to say. He was always interested in who the brightest people were in the rising generations, and would seek them out. And they would enjoy him. It was that he was socially active -- not a recluse in the slightest. At Nowruz it was very important to him for him to visit, and people to visit him, and, of course, his family relationships were vast and extensive, so that made matters easier.

A fascinating and important historical figure.

Q. Mehdi Bazargan.

A. A very slight -- one acquaintance of his .... At the time when I was in Iran, he was mostly in jail, so .... I had heard a great deal about him, because of the Freedom Movement and his role in the National Front -- I'd have to say -- "convention" in 1963 or '64, where he was seen as being on the fringe, on the extreme religious right. And was known, at that time, along with Taleghani, as the religious

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wing of the party. But was still within the umbrella of what was basically a secular party. Or series of groupings.

He seemed, at that time, to be a very decent, highly principled person, who was much respected for those reasons. By the more secular people he was thought to be overly religious. Those are all points of view that others had at the time. But he was always regarded as being honest and straightforward -- a man of principle, and willing to suffer for his principles, which he obviously did.

Q. Yes.

A. And still is, from all appearances.

Q. Where did you meet him?

A. It was just one occasion when they had .... During the period of the convention. It was just insignificant. I'm just aware of what he looks like.

Q. General Hasan Pakravan.

A. No. Pakravan was a very popular figure in Tehran, because... even though he was in SAVAK. He wasn't always



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that, of course. Because he was such a bright, intelligent, cultured man. And of course his wife and family were very civilized, and interested in the history and civilization of Iran. And was always regarded as a man who believed in minimum use of force, was always looking for political solutions and compromise, and using general methods rather than the harsh methods of other heads of SAVAK.

He was generally compared with General Bakhtiar as the two different ways of doing the job of head of secret police. American ambassadors and other officials would always seek his views of things, and he would seek theirs, and he was always regarded as an able ... civil servant, with the interests of his country and his king at heart. They saw him as a man who did a very difficult job very well.

As a personality, he was very engaging and polite and thoughtful and philosophical.

But that was not my world. <unclear> Because of my job as assistant to the ambassador, I would see him. On occasion,

Q. Could you describe one or two of these occasions when you met him?

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A. They were generally social -- dinners and formal receptions of one kind or another. And I think he was with the Court, with the king, on another occasion, when I went with Ambassador Holms on embassy business: treaties and agreements of one kind or another.

Q. Asadollah Alam.

A. Alam I saw a lot of. Again, it was partially at the court, but ... he was very often a guest of Ambassador Holms. And they got along very well. And there were many occasions when I saw him. I played tennis with Mrs. Alam on a number of occasions at Amjadiye-h. Further, Mrs. Alam's brother, Qavam, was governor at Farmandar in, I think, Kermanshah, and I met him there. We became friends.

He was rather ..... I thought he was a very interesting, rather nice, person, this Qavam. And we visited the Qavam house in Shiraz ... lovely ...

But you could clearly see that Alam was very important to the Shah. He was one of the few people who could speak directly and frankly with the Shah. And he did. Even ..... And very skillfully. And with genuine affection.

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There was no question that Alam and the Shah were close and good friends. And that Alam was a ... one of the best ways to inform the Shah of a point of view or a petition. He was the most important advisor to the Shah, and that was evident to anyone who ever went to Court or saw the government in operation, was that <he was> the most important person to the Shah. And perhaps the death of Alam at the end, and his illness, account for some of the lack of resolve on the part of the Shah. He was, without question, the most important advisor to the Shah.

And someone who had a lot of ancien regime, with the whole Boroujerd .... The whole eastern province was his. His domain, in a way. And he had the kind of confidence that that kind of sense of place gives, it seems to me. He was very good with foreigners, westerners. He understood them, he was very skillful. He knew the facts pretty well. He was very well-informed.

But, with all of that, I think his basic view, as it was quite evident, was the Shah's basically absolute rule was the right course. I think that was his view. And he was one of those who, at the crucial moments, I'm sure, would have counseled: "Don't give in. Keep your power intact. It's a slippery slope -- if you give a little bit, then more will go

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-- the beginning of the end. Hold on."

Basically, although I think he was tactically very good, too. He would know when the limits had been reached. He worked very hard at his job. He was good at it.

Q. Hasan-ali Mansour.

A. Well, I ... Yes, he was one of the group of the Progressive Center. He was seen quite a bit by the ambassador and by the minister. They were close personal friends. And seen as someone who could galvanize the allegiance of the younger -- relatively younger -- technocrats and Western-trained people. And that he would be a natural leader for those purposes. He seemed an attractive, able man for those purposes.

Of course, his assassination ... should have been seen as an indication of what was to come. The group that killed him, and the reasons why, their motivations, their beliefs, and so on, should have been, it seems to me, more thoughtfully assessed than they were. I think it was dismissed as a lunatic fringe. It was obviously a lunatic who killed him, because assassins tend to be lunatics, but the people behind assassins are another matter. And the reasons that compel

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people to want to kill other people <unclear>.

But he was typical of that group. His style of behavior, of social life was very characteristic. He was very well-to-do. Not quite on the scale of the Royal Court, but very successful. It was a representation of .... He had that sense of things. Very, on the whole, decent people, with the well-being of Iran, as always, in mind. I think that was the general attitude.

Q. Thank you Mr. Miller.